

Indefinite bandh begins in Arunachal's Lekang over govt recruitment eligibility rules

Itanagar, Aug 14: An indefinite bandh has been launched in Lekang by local organizations and community groups protesting against recent changes in government recruitment eligibility rules. The shutdown, which began early Friday morning, has paralyzed normal life in the district, with shops, schools, and transport services remaining closed. Protesters argue that the revised recruitment guidelines unfairly restrict opportunities for local candidates, particularly in government and semi-government

jobs. Demonstrators blocked key roads and staged sit-ins, demanding immediate withdrawal of the new rules and restoration of earlier eligibility criteria. Community leaders stated that the bandh will continue until the government responds positively to their demands. Security forces have been deployed across Lekang to maintain order, though the bandh has so far remained largely peaceful. Police officials confirmed that additional personnel have been stationed at sensitive points to prevent escalation. Local organiza-

tions spearheading the protest emphasized that the issue is not merely administrative but deeply tied to the aspirations of Arunachal's youth. "Employment opportunities are shrinking, and these rules further marginalize local candidates. We cannot remain silent," one organizer said. The bandh has drawn support from student unions, civil society groups, and sections of the business community, who argue that the new recruitment framework undermines indigenous rights. Farmers and traders also joined the



demonstrations, highlighting that unemployment and economic stress are already pressing concerns in the region. Government officials have appealed for calm, stating that the recruitment rules were designed to ensure transparency and efficiency. They assured that dialogue with stakeholders would be initiated soon. However, protesters remain skeptical, insisting that only a formal rollback will end the agitation. The indefinite bandh has disrupted essential services, with transport operators suspending

routes and daily wage earners facing hardship. Residents expressed frustration at the prolonged shutdown but acknowledged that the issue of fair recruitment is critical for the district's future. Political observers note that the unrest in Lekang reflects broader tensions across Arunachal Pradesh, where employment policies have often triggered public mobilization. The government's response in the coming days will likely determine whether the bandh escalates or subsides. As the standoff continues, Lekang

remains at a standstill, with the indefinite bandh symbolizing both the frustration and determination of its people to secure fair opportunities in government recruitment. Analysts further caution that prolonged disruption could weaken investor confidence in Arunachal Pradesh, as stability and transparent governance are key to attracting development projects. The Lekang bandh, therefore, is not only a local employment issue but also a test of the state's ability to balance reform with inclusivity.

Governor calls for sustainable development in Wokha

Dimapur, Aug 14: Nagaland governor Nand Kishore Yadav has called for people-centred and sustainable development in Wokha, with greater focus on livelihood opportunities, youth empowerment, quality public services and preservation of the district's cultural and natural heritage. Addressing district officials, community leaders, civil society representatives and other stakeholders at the DC office conference hall during his visit to the district headquarters on Thursday, Yadav said Wokha had significant potential in agriculture, horticulture, tourism, handicrafts and entrepreneurship. He called for



greater support to farmers and local producers through technology, processing, value addition and market

linkages, saying development should translate into better incomes and wider market opportunities.

Rahul Gandhi claims China stopped Indian patrols in Arunachal

New Delhi, Aug 14: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has alleged that the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has prevented Indian troops from patrolling certain areas in Arunachal Pradesh, sparking fresh debate over border security and government accountability. Speaking at a public interaction, Gandhi claimed that the Indian Army has been restricted from accessing traditional patrol routes along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). He argued that this development reflects a weakening of India's territorial control and accused the central government of failing to confront the issue transparently. "China has stopped our soldiers from pa-



trolling in parts of Arunachal. This is a matter of national

concern," Gandhi said, urging immediate disclosure of the

ground situation. His remarks come against the backdrop of

recurring tensions between India and China, particularly since the 2020 Galwan Valley clashes in Ladakh. While the Army has consistently maintained that its troops remain vigilant and capable of defending the border, Gandhi's statement has reignited political controversy over the handling of Chinese incursions. The Indian Army has previously dismissed similar claims, describing reports of fresh Chinese encroachment in Arunachal Pradesh as "baseless" and factually incorrect. Officials insist that surveillance and patrols continue as per established protocols, and that any attempt to alter the status quo would be countered.

Nagaland government, NETC hold meeting to explore power sector collaboration

Kohima, Aug 14: The Nagaland government convened a high-level meeting with representatives of the North Eastern Transmission Company (NETC) to explore avenues of collaboration in the state's power sector. The meeting, chaired by senior officials and attended by NETC executives, focused on strengthening electricity transmission infrastructure, addressing supply challenges, and ensuring long-term energy security for Nagaland. Officials highlighted that the state continues to face significant hurdles in meeting rising demand for reliable power, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. The government emphasized the need for modern transmission lines, grid stability, and

integration of renewable energy sources to reduce dependence on external supply. NETC representatives presented proposals for expanding transmission capacity, upgrading substations, and introducing advanced monitoring systems to minimize outages. They also assured technical support for integrating solar and hydro projects into the state grid, aligning with Nagaland's broader vision of sustainable energy development. Chief Secretary and senior energy department officials underscored that collaboration with NETC could help bridge critical gaps in infrastructure while creating opportunities for local employment and skill development. "Reliable power is the backbone of economic



growth. This partnership can transform Nagaland's energy landscape," one official remarked. The meeting also discussed potential public-private partnership models to attract investment into the sector. NETC suggested phased implementation of projects, beginning with high-priority districts where demand is acute. Both sides agreed to establish a joint working group to finalize technical and financial frameworks. Civil society representatives welcomed the initiative, noting that frequent power cuts have hampered education, healthcare, and small businesses across the state. They urged the government to ensure transparency and accountability in project execution. The Nagaland government

reiterated its commitment to improving power supply as part of its development agenda, stressing that collaboration with NETC is a step toward achieving energy self-sufficiency. With the groundwork now laid, the partnership is expected to yield concrete projects in the coming months, signaling a new chapter in Nagaland's efforts to modernize its power sector and deliver reliable electricity to its citizens. Observers note that this collaboration could also strengthen regional integration, as improved transmission networks in Nagaland may eventually link with neighboring states, enhancing the overall stability of the Northeast's power grid and fostering cross-border energy cooperation.

Nagaland Church Council opposes compulsory singing of patriotic hymn Vande Mataram

Kohima, Aug 14: The Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) has strongly opposed the proposal to make the singing of Vande Mataram compulsory in schools and institutions across the state, citing concerns over religious freedom and cultural sensitivity. In a statement issued today, the NBCC said that while it respects the national song as part of India's heritage, enforcing its recital would infringe upon the constitutional right to freedom of religion and conscience. The council emphasized that patriotism cannot be measured by compulsory participation in rituals, but must be reflected in genuine service, unity, and respect for diversity.

Church leaders argued that compulsory singing of Vande Mataram could alienate sections of the Christian community in Nagaland, who view certain verses of the hymn as conflicting with their faith. "True nationalism is inclusive and voluntary, not imposed," the NBCC noted, urging the government to reconsider the directive. The council's opposition comes amid wider debates across India on the role of national symbols in public life. While supporters of the move argue that Vande Mataram embodies India's struggle for freedom and should be honored universally, critics warn that compulsion risks undermining the very spirit of democracy. Civil so-



cety groups in Nagaland have echoed the NBCC's concerns, stressing that the state's unique

cultural and religious identity must be respected. Student organizations have also voiced

apprehension, saying that compulsory practices could create unnecessary divisions among young people. Government officials have yet to respond formally to the NBCC's statement, but sources indicate that discussions are ongoing to balance national directives with local sensitivities. The controversy highlights the delicate intersection of faith, identity, and nationalism in Nagaland, where community institutions play a central role in shaping public opinion. As India prepares to celebrate its 80th Independence Day, the debate over Vande Mataram underscores the continuing challenge of fostering unity while honoring diversity.

Arunachal police seize heroin in Changlang, arrest suspect

Itanagar, Aug 14: In a major breakthrough against narcotics trafficking, police in Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh seized 420.5 grams of heroin and arrested one individual during a targeted operation late Thursday evening. According to officials, the raid was conducted following credible intelligence inputs about drug movement in the border district. The accused was apprehended while attempting to transport the contraband, which was concealed in packets and intended for distribution in nearby towns. Police sources confirmed that the seized heroin carries significant street value, underscoring the scale of the operation. Superintendent of Police, Changlang, stated that



the arrest marks a crucial step in dismantling local drug networks that have been fueling addiction among youth. "Our teams are committed to a zero-tolerance approach against narcotics. This seizure is part of a sustained campaign to curb trafficking in the region," the officer said. The accused has been booked under rele-

vant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, and further investigation is underway to trace supply chains and identify accomplices. Authorities are also examining whether the consignment is linked to cross-border smuggling routes, given Changlang's proximity to Myanmar.

Government attributes the floods in Assam



Kohima, Aug 14: The Ministry of Home Affairs shut down claims that cloudbursts triggered July's deadly floods in Assam. The government confirmed that incessant rain across Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland caused the disaster. No cloudbursts occurred.

The Regional Meteorological Centre in Guwahati verified these findings.

The India Meteorological Department issued district-level warnings ahead of the heavy rainfall. Forecasters flagged extreme weather for Jorhat, Golaghat,

Sivasagar, and Charaideo seven days before the July 18 to 20 storms hit. An upper-air cyclonic circulation pushed through Northeast and Central Assam, locking in strong monsoonal activity across the re-

gion.

Death tolls climbed steadily as the waters rose. Data shows 78 people died between July 1 and 31. Sivasagar led the state with 42 fatalities, followed by 20 in Charaideo, nine in Jorhat, three in Golaghat, two in Karbi Anglong, and one each in

Dhemaji and Sonitpur. By August 4, the official count hit 88. Families of 71 victims have already received ex-gratia payments.

Relief efforts remain a priority.

The government eased the process to get cash to grieving families.

According to the MHA, "submission of a post-mortem report is not mandatory for sanction and payment of ex-gratia assistance" for those killed by floods or other disasters under SDRF and NDRF rules.

Nagaland Prepares for the 80th Independence Day Celebrations

Shillong, Aug 14: Nagaland will celebrate its 80th Independence Day on August 15. The state-level ceremony is set to commence at 9 a.m. at the Nagaland Secretariat Plaza in Kohima. Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio will raise the National Flag and receive the Rashtriya Salute. A Guard of Honour will be provided by state police, paramilitary forces, Home Guards, ex-servicemen, and NCC cadets.

Similar protocols will be observed for district and sub-divisional events. Deputy Chief Ministers, Ministers, and Advisors will oversee the flag hoisting at these local venues. The Department of Information and Public Relations has confirmed that all events will follow the sequence established by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The official agenda includes the singing of Vande Mataram, the flag raising, and the playing of the National Anthem. The Chief Minister will address the audience before they enjoy a march past and various cultural performances. The Department of Information and



Public Relations has stated, "When Vande Mataram is sung, audience members are expected to stand at attention, similar to the protocol

during the National Anthem."

The Home Department urges all citizens to participate in these local celebrations. For those who cannot

attend the capital, the state-level event will be streamed live on the official DIPR Nagaland YouTube channel.

Meghalaya Electoral Roll Revision Highlights Urban Voter Disparities

Shillong, Aug 14: Meghalaya's Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls reveals a sharp divide between urban and rural voter lists. South Shillong leads the state with 7,755 names marked as Absent, Shifted, Deceased or Duplicate. Ampati recorded the lowest count at 1,247 names. The gap is massive. These figures represent a six-fold difference in exclusions. The political stakes are high. In South Shillong, the 7,755 excluded names equal 22.76 percent of the electorate. This group is 66.8 percent of the winning margin for BJP's Sanbor Shullai in the 2023 Assembly election. Shullai defeated VPP's Danny Langstieh by 11,609 votes. Conversely, Ampati's 1,247 excluded names represent 54.8 percent of the 2,277-vote winning margin that secured victory for Trinamool



Congress candidate Miani D. Shira over NPP's Stevie M. Marak. Officials emphasize that these classifications do not automatically signal errors. The draft roll remains open for claims and objections until September 4. Urban centers like Nongthymmai, Pynthorunkhrah, North Shillong and West Shillong show similar trends. Mobile populations living in rentals

or moving for work likely drive these shifts. Still, the data lacks a breakdown of who actually moved versus who remains registered at old addresses. Authorities have flagged 1,80,402 names for exclusion, which remains distinct from the 6.51 lakh electors identified for broader scrutiny. Experts argue that mapping these exclusions against booth-level

data from the 2023 Form 20 results is essential. "The critical question is therefore not simply how many names were removed it is whose names were removed, and what was their political behaviour," analysts note. The final impact depends on how many legitimate voters successfully restore their status before the roll becomes official.

Despite Shah's concerns, CM hopeful of MRSSA progress

Shillong, Aug 14: Even as Union Home Minister Amit Shah has flagged concerns over the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act (MRSSA) and asked the state government to review certain provisions, Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Thursday expressed hope of making progress, describing recent discussions with the Union Home Ministry as "very positive."

Responding to a question on MDA ally UDP's efforts to take up the MRSSA issue with the Centre, Sangma said he and Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong had held a detailed meeting with the Union Home Secretary during his recent visit to New Delhi.

He said senior Meghalaya officials, including the Chief Secretary and Commission-



er Secretary in charge of Home, Police and Political matters, have also held several rounds of talks with the Union Home Secretary on various aspects of the legislation.

"We could understand that the Home Ministry, MHA and the Government of India are very positive about it," Sangma said.

The Chief Minister, however, stopped short of disclosing the specific issues being discussed, saying the matter involved several details that required consultation between the state and Centre.

"These are matters of details, and therefore it requires a lot of consultation, a lot of discussion at the offi-

cial level," he said.

Sangma said the Chief Secretary and Commissioner Secretary, Political, are expected to hold another meeting with the Centre shortly, expressing hope that the discussions would help take the matter forward.

The MRSSA was enacted by Meghalaya in 2016 with the stated objective of regulating the entry and settlement of outsiders in the state and strengthening mechanisms for protecting the interests of Meghalaya's indigenous residents. However, its implementation has remained contingent on the Centre's assent to certain provisions. The Ministry of Home Affairs had earlier advised the state to relook into aspects of the Act to ensure it withstands judicial and parliamentary scrutiny.

Assam Man Preserves Father's 1942 Freedom Struggle Relics



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Jaintia National Council Demands Meghalaya Halt Mining Project Over Land Rights

Shillong, Aug 14: The Jaintia National Council has presented a 10-day ultimatum to the government of Meghalaya. It calls for action concerning a proposed limestone mining project spanning 217.394 hectares by Shree Cement at Lum Syrman in East Jaintia Hills. The council has submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, urging the protection of the customary, possession, and cultivation rights of farmers in the Sutnga and Nongkhlieh Elakas.

General Secretary Wanshwa Suting asserts that the state favors corporate interests over those of indigenous residents. The council claims that police prevented locals from participating in a public hearing held on



July 31. They are now demanding a comprehensive review of that event, which should include all attendance records, complaints, and video documentation. The group insists on a

new consultation if any procedural irregularities are identified. During a recent press conference, Suting raised concerns about the official process. "If the government is as-

sured that everything has been conducted fairly and transparently, then why should affected landholders encounter barriers in exercising their right to participate?" he questioned. The council emphasizes that it is not opposed to development but requires a transparent verification of all land revenue and registration records.

The JNC has warned of peaceful, democratic protests should the government disregard these demands. They plan to await a formal response for ten days. Suting reiterated the group's position, stating, "This is a fight for justice, transparency, and the rights of the people whose land and livelihood are at stake." Any forthcoming protests will adhere to legal frameworks.

Meghalaya Bamboo Project Eyes Carbon

Shillong, Aug 14: A significant bamboo-planting initiative is currently underway in Meghalaya. The Bamboo-Centric Afforestation Carbon Project aims to restore 100,000 hectares over a span of eight years. The operation is being managed by Compliance Kart Pvt Ltd in collaboration with the Meghalaya Basin Management Agency. During the 2025-26 period, developers successfully planted 225,000 saplings across 5,000 hectares.

This past Thursday, Umtung village was the site of a major plantation event. More than 200 local residents participated alongside government officials to plant native species. The project focuses on rehabilitating degraded land in the Khasi and Garo Hills, areas that have been adversely affected by shifting cultivation, grazing, and fire. Bamboo constitutes 60 percent of the planting mix, while the remaining portion includes native fruit and forestry trees.

Financial incentives are a driving force behind this initiative. The project model guarantees that participating communities will receive at least 70 percent of all carbon-credit revenue. These credits are expected to begin accumulating in the second year of the project. Alok Panday, CEO of Compliance Kart, remarked, "The primary goal was to foster trust with the communities and create a sustainable revenue stream in conjunction with forest restoration."



Technology plays a pivotal role in monitoring growth. Organizers employ drones for mapping purposes and utilize a digital system to measure and verify outcomes. Subhash Ashutosh, representing the MBDA, elaborated on how these technological frameworks will facilitate progress tracking. Additionally, government officials highlighted the direct connection between this work and the economic well-being of rural areas. The success of the project relies on the long-term dedication of villagers to nurture the trees and maintain the health of the forest.

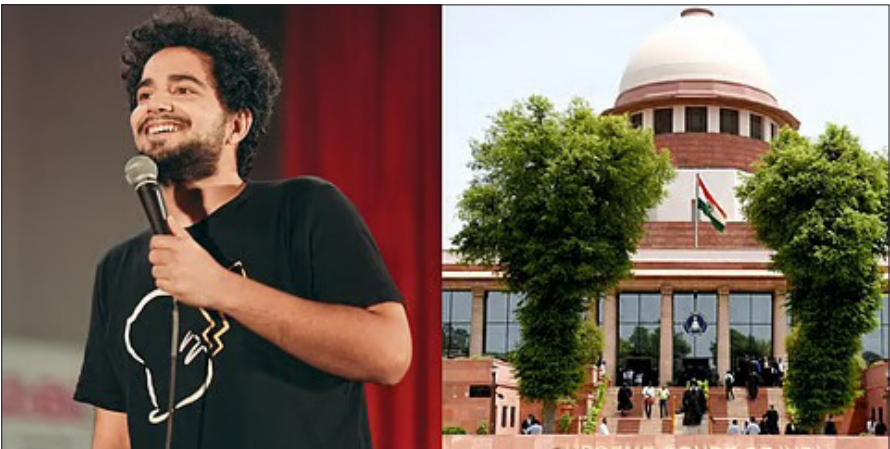
New Public Tea Auction Platform Launches



Shillong, Aug 14: Assam Chai Bazaar officially entered the market on Thursday. The public tea auction platform launched its website, www.assamchaibazaar.com, during an event at the Gymkhana Club in Dibrugarh. Prashanta Borah of the Tea Board of India attended the unveiling. Assam produces 65 per cent of India's tea. Growers have long demanded lower costs and faster payments. The Tea Board of India granted a license to ASSAM CHAI BAZAAR LLP to organize these auctions. Promoters include Chand Kr Gohain, Deven Singh, Gautam Beria, Chandrajit Baruah, and Sumit Agarwalla. The platform promises a quick turnaround. Sellers will finish the entire transaction cycle in 25 days. The process targets a 12-day sale window, followed by payments within the next 13 days. The promoters said the new platform is designed to "simplify the auction process and enable sellers to complete the entire transaction within 25 days."

FIRs Regarding Insensitive Remarks Made by Samay Raina Canceled by the Supreme Court

New Delhi, Aug 14: Co-median Samay Raina was greatly relieved when the Supreme Court on Friday dismissed all formal complaints against him and four other people for making offensive comments about people with disabilities. The comedian was booked for his comments on “India’s Got Latent” along with four other people. The court had already chastised the comedian for the crude jokes and mandated that Raina organize awareness campaigns and raise money for people with disabilities. A panel made up of Chief Justice Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi, and Justice JV Mohana dismissed all cases against Raina and others on Friday after noting their adherence to the top court’s orders. During the last hearing, the court had imposed a cost of Rs 3 lakh on Raina and four others, observing that



he had taken the court for a ride by not complying with the undertakings given to make amends. The Court on Friday appreciated the efforts made by Raina and others to organise shows for the benefit of persons with disabilities. “Once there are genuine efforts positive results are bound to be there. They are very bright youngsters. If they have started working in positive direction, there

will be positive output,” the Bench said. The Court proceeded to quash criminal cases filed against them over insensitive remarks against disabled persons. The Cure SMA India Foundation filed a suit in the highest court, claiming that Raina made offensive comments about the high expense of treating spinal muscular atrophy and made fun of someone who had the condition. Jokes made

by “India’s Got Latent” host Raina and other social media personalities Vipun Goyal, Balraj Paramjeet Singh Ghai, Sonali Thakkar, and Nishant Jagdish Tanwar were highlighted in the petition. The contentious “India’s Got Latent” episode was filmed in November. Numerous lawsuits were brought against Raina and other comics for allegedly making offensive and insensitive comments.

Delhi High Court affirms a man’s conviction for sodomizing an 11-year-old

New Delhi, Aug 14: The Delhi High Court declined to overturn the conviction of a man charged with sodomizing an 11-year-old homeless boy, arguing that it is unrealistic to expect a child living on the streets to provide information about the date, time, or attire with the same precision as a witness who lives in a stable setting. Justice Chandrasekharan Sudha confirmed the trial court’s August 2025 conviction of the accused under Section 377 (unnatural offenses) IPC and Section 6 (Punishment for aggravated penetrative sexual assault) of the POCSO Act in a ruling rendered on the accused’s appeal on August 10. The judge, however, modified the trial court’s 20-year jail term to ten years on the grounds that at the time of the offence, the corresponding sentence was a decade. Section 6 POCSO Act became punishable with a minimum term of 20 years with effect from August 16, 2019. The minor alleged that in November 2016, the accused sexually assaulted him while he was sleeping under a railway bridge at Kashmere Gate. After the youngster told them about the occurrence, some social workers who had organized a program in the vicinity to provide free medical aid to the homeless reported it on the police helpline. According to the accused’s attorney, he was wrongfully implicated. He contended that there were multiple contradictions in the youngster’s evidence about the incident and the dress he was wearing, and that the prosecution had failed to establish that the boy was younger than twelve. The boy’s incapacity to provide his precise age, birthdate, or other data would not help the accused, the court ruled, rejecting the defense. It said although in his testimony, the survivor claimed that he was about 15 years of age, given his social background, it was “un-

realistic” to expect him to know his exact age. The school record showed his date of birth as October 12, 2005, making him 11 years old at the time of the incident, the court observed. The court stated that the accused’s identity, the place of incident, the nature of the sexual assault and the sequence of events immediately after the incident remained substantially unchanged throughout all versions testified by the minor boy. The discrepancies with respect to the exact time, the description and colour of the clothes worn by the boy, the precise order in which the NGO workers and the police reached the spot, etc, do not “detract from the consistent allegation of forcible anal intercourse”, it stated. The court also held that the absence of any external injuries on the minor was not sufficient to discredit his otherwise “consistent and trustworthy testimony”. “The evidence on record reveals that PW1 was a homeless child living on the streets and earning his livelihood by rag-picking. In such circumstances, it would be unrealistic to expect him to possess exact knowledge of his date of birth or to narrate every detail of the incident with mathematical accuracy,” observed the court. “Minor inconsistencies, omissions, or enhancements that do not directly affect the prosecution’s case are inevitable outcomes of typical mistakes in observation and recollection, especially when a young witness remembers a horrific event after some time has passed. Additionally, it must be remembered that PW1 was a homeless youngster who lived on the streets and was involved in rag-picking. As such, it is not reasonable to expect PW1 to provide exact details about dates, times, or attire with the same level of accuracy as a witness who lived in a stable setting, the court stated.

Congress leaders were ineffective: Revanth Reddy claims that 21% of Telangana voters might be removed under SIR



New Delhi, Aug 14: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has warned that approximately 21% of votes could be erased during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR), which could result in over 73 lakh voters leaving Telangana’s electoral lists. Reddy allegedly accused Congressmen at all levels on Thursday of not carrying out their duties to the fullest extent possible. Reddy instructed in-charge ministers to have reviews with those in charge of

Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies in their respective districts and address the issues during a video conference with governing Congress lawmakers on the SIR process, according to news agency, citing sources. According to Congress sources, the ministers have been ordered to submit a report for each constituency and undertake reviews throughout the districts over the course of the next two days. Reddy also instructed constituency in-

charge leaders to remain in their respective constituencies for four days, identify issues related to the revision process and work to resolve them. The chief minister warned that the party would not tolerate any failure to draw up and implement a proper action plan in line with the directions of the AICC. He warned that future political harm could result from party leaders’ lack of alertness. According to the sources, Reddy also gave Congress leaders instructions to reveal what he claimed was a plot by the BRS and BJP to remove votes. The SIR procedure is likely to reduce Telangana’s electorate by about 73 lakh, and the enumeration forms for these voters are deemed “uncollectable,” raising concerns. The state had 3,38,26,448 voters overall, according to a statement released on August 11 by Telangana Chief Electoral Officer C Sudharshan Reddy. 2,64,87,214 voters, or 78.30 percent, had their enumeration forms digitized. The remaining 73,39,234 forms, account-

ing for 21.70 per cent of the total, were classified as “uncollectable”, he said. House-to-house visits by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) as part of the SIR began in Telangana on June 25 and concluded on August 10. The draft electoral rolls are scheduled to be published on August 17. However, in the current SIR effort, up to 18.46%, or 18 million, of Maharashtra’s 97.8 million registered voters are anticipated to be removed from the electoral lists. These voters are either deceased, duplicates, untraceable at the specified address, or have moved. 29.6% of deletions occur in Mumbai, and nearly 40% occur in Muslim-majority districts like Mankhurd, Colaba, and Mumbadevi. Of the 9,78,54,049 registered voters, 7,60,98,153 have been counted, according to figures issued by the Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday. However, 1,80,60,697 (18.46% of all electors) could not be counted. August 17 is the deadline for finishing the SIR exercise.

IIT-Guwahati creates a cheap catalyst to produce hydrogen from water



Guwahati, Aug 14: According to the Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati, researchers have created a cheap catalyst that can turn water into hydrogen, which could help India’s National Green Hydrogen Mission and hasten the country’s transition to sustainable energy. Since the only result of using hydrogen to generate electricity is water, it is regarded as a crucial part of the world’s shift to clean energy. It is also extensively utilized in fuel cells and as a raw ingredient in other sectors, such as the production of fertilizers. However, around 90-95 per cent of hydrogen is currently produced from fossil fuels. Production of grey and blue hydrogen from natural gas and brown and black hydrogen from coal releases greenhouse gases. Producing hydrogen from water through electrolysis is a cleaner alternative but requires efficient catalysts. Existing high-performance catalysts often rely on rare and expensive noble metals, limiting their large-scale deployment. To address this challenge, IIT-Guwahati researchers used inexpensive and widely available nickel salt as a key component of a water-splitting catalyst. They combined it with an anthracene-based organic molecule to improve efficiency and stability. The team developed a coordination polymer-based catalyst in which anthracene units are interlinked through nickel nodes. The material was synthesised through a simple process at room temperature using ultrasonic waves, said Akshai Kumar, associate professor in the Department of Chemistry at IIT-Guwahati, who led the study. According to Kumar, the structure facilitates effective electron transport through the material and produces a high density of active sites for the hydrogen evolution reaction. Nearly 88% of the electrical energy supplied was used to split water, and the researchers discovered that the catalyst remained stable during extended periods of operation.

The Arunachal Cabinet has approved uniform hiring practices for public positions

Itanagar, Aug 14: A valid Permanent Residence Certificate (PRC), Arunachal Pradesh Scheduled Tribe (APST) status, and fluency in an indigenous tribal language are now requirements for direct recruitment to Group A, B, and C government positions, according to uniform eligibility criteria approved by the Arunachal Pradesh Cabinet on Thursday. The regulations will be applicable to direct hiring for state government agencies, public sector projects, autonomous organizations, and local and urban entities through competitive exams. The appropriate Recruitment and Service Rules will integrate the provisions, which will go into force immediately. Candidates must be Indian citizens and inhabitants of Arunachal Pradesh, possess a valid PRC and APST certificate, and are orig-



inal inhabitants of the state. They must also demonstrate proficiency in at least one notified indigenous tribal language. The Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission and Arunachal Pradesh Staff Selection Board were directed to incorporate the provisions, including a post-joining language test, in future recruitment processes. The decision came amid demands from state organisations, including the All Arunachal Pradesh Students’ Union, for stronger safeguards for

employment opportunities for indigenous youths and the abolition of the existing 80:20 recruitment ratio. However, the Cabinet did not state that the ratio had been abolished. Additionally, a one-time two-year exemption of the eight-year qualifying service length for promotion to Principal and Deputy Director of School Education was agreed by the Cabinet, lowering the need to six years. The draft Arunachal Pradesh Industrial Development Area Bill, 2026, the resignation of foresters as Deputy Forest Rangers (Special Grade), and a number of changes and service relaxations in government agencies were also accepted. Additionally, it approved moving the Public Works Department’s Rupa Highway Division to Nafra in the Bichom district and renaming it the Nafra PWD Division.

JNC wants the Meghalaya government to step in regarding farmers’ land rights in the East Jaintia Hills

Shillong, Aug 14: In an alleged land dispute between farmers and landowners in East Jaintia Hills, where Swissmen, a Swiss mining corporation, has proposed a mining facility in Lom Saman, the Jaintia National Council (JNC) has called on the Meghalaya government to step in. In order to defend the rights of farmers and landowners in Ieka Nong Klee and Ieka Sutengah, the JNC sent a memo to Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma’s office. JNC leaders claimed that local farmers and landowners had been deprived of their rights by having their land removed with-

out their permission in conjunction with the proposed mining project. The organisation also accused the state government of favouring the company and alleged that police personnel had prevented residents of Ieka Nong Klee and Ieka Sutengah from attending a public hearing related to the proposed project held on July 31. The JNC alleged that the government was more concerned about facilitating the company than addressing the concerns of indigenous residents and resolving the land-related issues. The organisation demanded immediate government interven-

tion to protect the rights of the affected farmers and landowners. Representatives from the JNC issued a warning, stating that the group would think about starting a legal and nonviolent agitation if the government did not act. The council stated that it had given the government time to reply to its memorandum and that, before determining its next line of action, it will conduct discussions after evaluating the administration’s response. Any future agitation, according to the JNC, will be nonviolent and compliant with the law.

Advocate General Amit Kumar is removed off the rolls by Meghalaya bar associations

Shillong, Aug 14: The High Court of Meghalaya Bar Association and the Shillong Bar Association have severed their relations with Advocate General Amit Kumar and are requesting that he be removed from his position as part of an intensifying dispute between Meghalaya’s top law officer and the state’s legal community. The ruling came after a joint extraordinary general body meeting on August 5, where over 400 advocates deliberated about Kumar’s purported comments made during a suo motu case involving the public attack and parading of an advocate in Shillong. The bar associations have now removed Kumar from their rolls and resolved that their members will no longer recognise him as the Advocate General of Meghalaya. They have also asked the state government to remove him from the post. The immediate trigger was Kumar’s alleged assertion before the High Court that bar associations had failed to ensure the safety of women lawyers and provide them with a secure working environment. The associations took exception to what they viewed as broad allegations against the legal fraternity. The remarks came during proceedings over an incident in which an advocate was allegedly dragged out of his chamber and paraded through Shillong by members of the Hynniewtre National Youth Front (HNYF). The advocate had earlier faced allegations of molesting an intern. The incident had prompted the two bar associations to approach Chief Justice Revati Mohite Dere, alleging that authorities had failed to prevent the public humiliation and assault of the advocate. While hearing the case on July 31, a bench made up of



Chief Justice Dere and Justice W. Diengdoh observed that although the police were there throughout the incident, they initially seemed to have failed to step in. On August 3, the court was notified that four members of the HNYF had been taken into custody. After the bar associations asked Kumar for an explanation, the debate around his comments grew more heated. According to reports, his statement did not resolve the matter, which led the associations to decide to formally disassociate themselves from him. The conflict has developed concurrently with a different court case over the defense of female advocates and young female interns. Representatives of the bar groups informed the court during the August 3 hearing that they were still dedicated to protecting their dignity and safety. The State Bar Council and Bar Council of India were then called into the case by the High Court, which ordered them to address issues pertaining to the security of female attorneys and interns in Meghalayan courts. On August 19, the suo motu case will be heard once more. The Meghalaya government is currently considering the bar groups’ request to remove Kumar from his position as Advocate General.

EDITORIAL

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Iran policy at a crossroads as U.S. leverage wanes

What is President Donald Trump really up to? Over five months after he and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu unilaterally launched their war against Iran February 28, with sensational as-sassination of Tehran’s su-preme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on the first day, the war is nowhere near an end. After blitzkrieg-like aerial attacks by the US and Israel on Iran’s military and infrastructure failed to achieve its objectives, as Iran countered hard at the Gulf Arab states hosting US military bases, America and Iran signed an interim mem-orandum of understanding in June to halt mutual-re-taliatory attacks and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a final peace deal still proves elu-sive. The negotiations have hit fresh hurdles over con-trol of the Strait of Hormuz, and on shipping terms and tariffs. Meanwhile, as the war becomes increasingly unpopular in the US, Pres-ident Trump’s desperation to get out of the Iran-mess grows by the day, particu-larly with the midterm elec-tions looming.

The questions continue to be intriguing. Why is the world’s sole superpow-er still addicted to fighting wars across continents, far from its homeland, and why does it see ghosts in its imaginary adversaries? Why the insatiable hun-ger for bloodshed and why doesn’t it cease its endless invasions and interventions in Asia, South America, Central America and North Africa after seven decades? Why does POTUS continue this “gunboat capitalism” as a “tool of state power”, which will make no nation richer or safer? Declassified CIA documents revealed how the US had targeted Iran’s sovereignty in a 1953 coup, which was widely known but acknowledged only in 2013. Before that, the world had already seen the Korean War (1950-1953). The list of America’s forward deployment and di-visive diplomacy grew with breakneck speed, result-ing in all-round destruction in terrain “far from mainland USA”. There was the Leb-anon intervention (1953); Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba (1961); Vietnam (1955-1975); the invasion of Grenada (1983); strikes on Libya (1986); the Pan-ama invasion (1986); the first Gulf War (1990-1991); the intervention in Soma-lia (1992-1995); Kosovo (1999); Afghanistan (2001-2021); the Iraq invasion (2003-2011); the Libya in-tervention (2011) and now the Iran war, beginning Feb-ruary 2026.

Contextually, one must also peruse the words of scholar Nathan Robinson: “Between 1946 and 2000, the US undertook over 80 election-interference ops around the world”. The most startling, however, is former secretary of state Mike Pompeo’s admission at Texas A&M Universi-ty on “Why Diplomacy Matters” in April 2019:

“What’s the cadet motto at West Point? You will not lie, cheat, or steal, or tol-erate those who do. I was CIA director. We lied, we cheated, we stole. We had entire training courses. It reminds you of the glory of the American experiment.” That’s the transparent and profound declaration of an inherently disruptive policy which has practical applica-tion in every nation of the world. One can, therefore, conclude that the present assault launched by the US and Israel will continue to torment Tehran as long as it takes to fulfil the “glory of the American experiment” and “mission success”. The world knows that it is an unequal contest between the US-Israel duo and the Islamic Republic. The like-ly outcome is the inevitable flattening of Iran’s terri-tory (like in Vietnam and Afghanistan). In the pro-longed conflicts in the Far East, Southeast Asia and poverty-afflicted landlocked Afghanistan, all three were ravaged, but could not be vanquished, conquered or captured. All three forced the US to vacate their soil and make an ignominious retreat. True, the warriors of Wall Street wrecked the wretched, poor but fear-less Afghans, the valiant and valorous Vietnamese and courageous Koreans, but the outcome was zero. And now Iran is the fourth Asian target. It will be im-possible not to believe that the Persians won’t do what they have been doing for thousands of years with un-matched bravery and envi-able self-pride.

The battered, unbent but a charged Iran has openly challenged Mr Trump: “We want a land invasion”. Teh-ran has claimed that “Iran has the advantage: It has been accumulating missiles and drones for decades now. We are prepared for a land war.” For Tehran, that is the preferred option because air power alone can never win a war on its own. The only exception perhaps was the August 1945 use of nuclear weapons on Japan’s Hiro-shima and Nagasaki by the US Air Force. Similarly, conquest or capture of land can’t be done solely by the Navy, no matter how strong and versatile the fleet. Boots on the ground are the ulti-mate reality of any war even today. In Korea and Afghan-istan, American boots had to be left behind, and Vietnam proved to be a super death-trap for land warriors. The US lost 300,000 soldiers in the Second World War, the lowest among the Allied powers, compared to the Soviet Union’s 30 million fatalities. The 58,220 deaths and 153,372 “wounded in action” in Vietnam taught American leaders some hard lessons. Tragically for the US, most of those killed in Vietnam were incredibly young: over 60 per cent fallen soldiers were under 21. Far worse was the Feb-ruary-June 1945 invasion of Okinawa and Iwo Jima, where the US suffered the highest war casualties while putting boots on the ground.

Dietary shifts in India: balancing protein needs and cultural preferences

The most recent National Fam-ily Health Survey does not directly measure protein intake, but nev-ertheless shows substantial gaps in dietary diversity, particularly among poorer households. Eggs are a great source of high-quality protein and several essential mi-cronutrients. They can improve the nutritional quality of a child’s diet by replacing calories from a staple cereal. The current debate on whether to provide eggs to all children should be seen from that context.

I was one of 24 commissioners of the EAT-Lancet Commission published in 2025. The commis-sion asked a broader question than whether people should eat more or less meat: What would a healthy diet look like if we also wanted to keep the planet within envi-ronmental limits and make food systems healthier and more sus-tainable? The answer was emphat-ically not veganism. The commis-sion’s recommended diet is largely plant-based but includes moderate amounts of animal-source foods. For an adult reference diet of ap-proximately 2,400 calories a day, it recommends about 15 grams of red meat, 30 grams of poultry, 30 grams of fish and shellfish, and 15 grams of eggs per person per day. These are population-level refer-ence values, and not prescriptions for every individual or country. In fact, it is possible to complete-ly omit any of these as long as there are appropriate substitutes. In South Asia, unlike many other regions, red-meat consumption is low compared to the rest of the world. Also, the consumption of many healthy foods including vegetables, fruits, legumes and nuts is well below global levels. The Lancet commission report does not argue that Indians should simply eat more meat, but rather emphasises a dietary pattern built



around whole grains, vegetables, fruits, legumes and nuts, with moderate amounts of dairy, fish, eggs and poultry and low amounts of red meat. The reference diet is flexible and can accommodate flexitarian, vegetarian, pescatarian and vegan diets, as well as differ-ent food cultures and agricultural systems. While meat is a potential source of protein, it does not have to be the only source.

Eggs are especially relevant to school-meals that are mostly giv-en to children with less than ideal home food. Fish, meat, eggs and dairy are rich sources of nutrients important to children, includ-ing iron, vitamin B12, zinc, and calcium. Lower intakes of ani-mal-source foods can create nutri-tional deficiencies if they are not adequately replaced by other nutri-ent-rich foods. Rather than asking whether an egg turns a meal into

a “non-vegetarian” diet, the useful question is whether adding an egg is an effective and acceptable way of improving the nutritional qual-ity of a child’s meal. Where eggs are culturally acceptable, afford-able and logistically feasible, there is a strong case for using them as one option among others, especial-ly since they are a cost-effective way of providing those nutrients to children.

Meanwhile, there is indeed a powerful environmental case for eating less meat, particularly red meat. Livestock production has substantial impacts on green-house-gas emissions, land use, freshwater use and biodiversity. Each kilogram of bovine meat takes over ten times the amount of water to produce compared to its equivalent in plant terms, while poultry consumes nearly three times as much. Nearly three-quar-

ters of antibiotic consumption is related to livestock and contributes to the growth of untreatable infec-tions in both humans and animals. The argument that lower meat con-sumption is planet-friendly is hard to dispute and even a country like China now encourages its people to eat less meat. In fact, the sim-plest advice remains that of writer Michael Pollan: “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.” It is hard to improve upon as a general prin-ciple and should be the basis for guiding thinking about diets.

But food choices are not made just on the basis of protein and calorie intake, water or carbon footprint, advice from writers or government preferences. What people eat reflects their religion, culture, family, geography, income and identity. In this context, the State should be very careful about turning environmental concerns or

a cultural agenda into a campaign against meat. There is a credibility problem when the same govern-ments that ask citizens to change their behaviour for the sake of the environment routinely tolerate air pollution, untreated sewage, illegal mining, groundwater depletion and habitat destruction. Even worse, if reducing meat consumption be-comes associated with a particular religious or cultural agenda, an en-vironmental argument can quickly become an argument about identity and could provoke a backlash, and paradoxically work in the direction of greater meat consumption. The history of prohibition shows that when governments try to regulate consumption preferences through bans, they can create unintended consequences that complicate the original objective.

There is a better way. We should put eggs in school meals where they improve children’s nutrition and where they are acceptable to the communities being served. At the same time, we should make pulses, vegetables, fruits, nuts and other nutritious foods more afford-able and accessible. We should edu-cate people about the health and environmental consequences of different foods, reduce food loss and waste, and protect healthy tradi-tional diets. The objective should be to give Indians the nutrition they need while allowing diets to become healthier and more sus-tainable. For India, that means im-proving dietary diversity, making nutritious foods including eggs where appropriate available to children, encouraging more pulses, vegetables, fruits and nuts, and re-ducing excessive consumption of environmentally costly foods such as red meat. The best food policy is one that gives people better choic-es for a balanced diet while leaving the final choice of what to eat to them.

Govt priorities questioned over treatment of national song and national anthem

President Droupadi Murmu recently gave assent to the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, making it an Act. It criminalises an intentional disruption of the singing of the National Anthem Jan Gana Mana and the National song Vande Mataram. It is another matter that the legislation adds only a single term, ‘National Song’, to Section 3 of the existing National Honour Act, 1971 (2005).

However, a curious discrepancy or a big con-tradiction appears as to honouring one while demeaning the other, unintentionally. All thanks to home minister Amit Shah and the home min-istry. The Vande Mataram Bill was introduced last month by the home minister(s). But six months earlier, the home ministry had already issued an ‘Immediate’ permanent order regard-ing the National Song to all government institu-tions. All schools and agencies were directed to ensure ‘strict compliance’ with it. What it had is worth pondering. The order contains a detailed directive only regarding honour for the Na-tional Song. Its title itself declares so: “Orders relating to the National Song of India-reg”. Ac-cordingly, the details of it mention the ‘National Song’ about 30 times, whereas the ‘National Anthem’ is mentioned only twice. Even these two mentions seem a forced necessity since it could not be ignored altogether. What meaning does it convey but that the National Anthem is optional? That only the National Song must be fully honoured, and always. What is it if not de-meaning one to respect the other? This becomes even clearer from Clause IV (2) of the order: “When the National Song and the National An-them are sung or played, National Song will be sung or played first.” This was contrary to the prevailing National Honour Act, 1971 (2005), which stipulated that obstructing the singing of the National Anthem is punishable. To displace the National Anthem—as the order did by ask-ing that the National Song be sung first—was to obstruct its singing. How can a ministry order undo the provision of an existing Act? After all, the prevailing National Honour Act mentioned only the National Anthem, and called the ob-struction of its singing an offence. Relegating it behind the National Song amounted to dis-respect.

Indeed, even in section 3 (a) of the newly amended National Honour Act, the National Anthem comes first and the National Song sec-ond. Therefore, the home ministry’s 28 January



order remains inconsistent with the Act. How does one resolve this contradiction? And what does the indecent situation say about our rulers and ‘lawmakers’, who unnecessarily pit the National Song against the National Anthem? If you’re still not convinced, look at Clause III (5) of the order. It directs that “In all schools, the day’s work may begin with community singing of the National Song.” At the time this order was issued, it ran contrary to the National Honour Act, under which obstructing the sing-ing of the National Anthem was/is punishable. The document said nothing about what should happen in lakhs of schools across the country where, for decades, the day had always begun with the National Anthem. The order only ex-plicitly states that henceforth, the day is to begin with the National Song. Period. It is, therefore, natural that every school would be singing the National Song since last January—that was the express order. The National Anthem may have been omitted. There is neither any sense in sing-ing both, nor does the order direct that both be sung. Thus, in practice, the order obstructs the National Anthem. Verily an offence under the Act, even today.

One may wonder why this contradictory,

ill-conceived, childish exercise? No honour is obtained by ordering. Rather, it instinctively makes one flinch. A critic can legitimately say that the government cares neither for the Na-tional Anthem nor the National Song. Rather, it seems interested only in finding a pretext to belittle Opposition leaders, especially the Con-gress and poor Nehru. The suspicion arises be-cause many ruling leaders over the past year, talking of Vande Mataram, have mainly run a suo motu campaign to denounce the Congress. Some of these leaders might have been disap-pointed when the Vande Mataram Bill passed in Parliament without debate. They were look-ing for the Opposition to say something, to which they could unleash yet another torrent of mud-slinging against Nehru. But the Opposition made itself scarce. The Bill passed without dis-cussion. After all, which Indian would not wish to accord due respect to the National Song? The sad irony is that our rulers have nothing to say against the class of leaders that has openly op-posed Vande Mataram for over 100 years, even issuing fatwas against it (indeed, it was for this reason also that Vande Mataram could not be the National Anthem itself).

No leader of the ruling establishment is seen

criticising or trying to persuade and reason with those who actually denounce Vande Mataram as ‘kufri’ and idolatry. Instead, they vilify the Congress, which had been singing the song at its sessions and conferences long before these rulers were even born. So what exactly was the purpose of the year-long ‘honour Vande Mataram’ exercise? It has had no effect what-soever upon those who consider the National Song ‘kufri’. Meanwhile, the government un-wittingly diminished the dignity of the National Anthem in its fervour for the National Song. It is regrettable that leaders who have held virtually all power for years should display such a mean tendency. Instead of working together for the country, they are preoccupied with disparag-ing other parties—even unnecessarily, as in the present case—thereby weakening the national spirit and encouraging partisan acrimony. They did not realise that, in trying to be more patriot-ic, their order to all government agencies ended up demeaning the National Anthem. A move not only hasty and improper, but also contrary to an existing law. This is not patriotism but party supremacy. However well-intentioned it might be, it is harmful to Indian society, educa-tion, and culture.

LEAP India Lists at 4% Premium Before Shares Slip Below Issue Price

Mumbai: Shares of LEAP India Ltd. made a positive debut on the stock exchanges, listing at a little over 4 per cent above the IPO price amid profit-booking. The stock opened at Rs 166 on the BSE, a 4.40 per cent premium to its issue price of Rs 159, while the NSE debut stood at Rs 165.90, up 4.34 per cent. The shares later fell to Rs 152.25 on the BSE and Rs 154.21 on the NSE. LEAP India raised Rs 2,480 crore through its IPO, which was subscribed 8.38 times between August 7 and August 11. The Qualified Institutional Buyers portion was subscribed 16.84 times, while the NII and retail portions were subscribed 12.64 times and 1.71 times, respectively. The fresh issue of Rs 480 crore will primarily be used to repay or prepay borrowings, with the balance allocated for general corporate purposes.

SEBI Proposes Remote Digital KYC for Overseas Securities Investors

New Delhi: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has proposed a new digital Know-Your-Customer framework that would allow Non-Resident Indians, Overseas Citizens of India and eligible foreign nationals in Financial Action Task Force-compliant jurisdictions to complete securities-market KYC procedures remotely from outside India.

The proposal, outlined in a consultation paper issued on August 14, seeks to remove the requirement for overseas investors to be physically present in India during digital onboarding. The existing constraint has often required investors living abroad to rely on physical documentation and verification processes to open securities accounts in the country.

Under the proposed framework, investors would be able to submit KYC documents through mobile applications, web portals and other electronic platforms. Digitally signed scanned forms would



be permitted, while cropped images of specimen signatures could also be accepted if the investor provides a live wet signature during a mandatory Video In-Person Verification process.

The proposed system would also simplify document authentication by allowing market intermediaries to verify information through DigLocker, digitally verifiable records issued by authorised entities, Aadhaar authentication and certifications from designated bodies. SEBI has proposed expanding the list of eligible certifying authorities to include authorised officials of overseas banks that

maintain formal correspondent relationships with Indian banks.

Intermediaries would continue to collect investors' email addresses and contact numbers. However, mobile-number verification would be required only where technically possible, potentially addressing difficulties faced by investors using foreign mobile networks.

The proposed relaxation would be accompanied by enhanced technological safeguards for remote verification. Intermediaries operating in FATF-compliant jurisdictions would be required to use live GPS location capture,

liveness detection, facial biometric matching, anti-spoofing measures for IP addresses, end-to-end encryption and simultaneous audit trails during Video In-Person Verification.

SEBI has also proposed an attribute-level KYC portability mechanism for overseas individual investors. Under the system, individual components of a KYC record would be identified according to their verification status, allowing different market intermediaries to reuse information that has already been validated while carrying out additional checks only when required.

The proposed framework is aimed at making India's securities-market onboarding process more accessible to overseas investors while retaining safeguards against identity fraud and other compliance risks. SEBI has invited comments and suggestions from market participants and the public on the consultation paper until September 4, 2026.

Reddit Shares Jump 12% After S&P 500 Inclusion Announcement

New Delhi: Shares of Reddit Inc. surged more than 12 per cent in pre-market trading on August 14 after S&P Dow Jones Indices announced that the social media company would be added to the benchmark S&P 500 index.

Reddit shares climbed to \$177.97 following the announcement, with the company scheduled to enter the index before trading begins on August 18. The addition will fill the position being vacated by real estate investment trust AvalonBay Communities following its all-stock merger with Equity Residential.

The merger will create a combined rental housing company valued at around \$69 billion. The new entity will remain part of the S&P 500 under the name Vivmark Residential once the transaction is completed.

Reddit's inclusion represents a significant milestone for the platform, which went public on the New York Stock Exchange in March 2024 at an IPO price of \$34 per share.

The company will become only the second dedicated social media business in the S&P 500 after Meta Platforms.

The announcement triggered a sharp rise in Reddit shares as investors anticipated additional demand from funds that track the index. Analysts estimated that passive exchange-traded funds and mutual funds following the S&P 500 could need to purchase approximately 16.7 million Reddit shares to replicate the company's index weighting.

The estimated purchases are nearly three times Reddit's average daily trading volume of around 5.98 million shares since its market debut. The expected demand from index-tracking funds could therefore provide significant near-term support to the stock.

The index inclusion comes after a difficult period for Reddit's shares. The stock had fallen more than 31 per cent through August 13 since the beginning of 2026 and remained around 42 per

cent below its record high reached in September 2025.

The company's latest quarterly results had also highlighted challenges affecting domestic user growth. Reddit said fluctuations in traffic referrals from search engines had affected user growth in the United States during the second quarter, partly offsetting strong growth in revenue.

OpenAI Chief Executive Officer Sam Altman remains among Reddit's largest individual shareholders. Altman invested in the company during its Series B funding round in 2014 and held an 8.7 per cent stake when Reddit went public. The value of his remaining holdings was estimated at nearly \$2 billion following the latest increase in the company's share price.

The S&P 500 inclusion is expected to increase Reddit's visibility among institutional investors while generating additional demand from passive funds that are required to hold companies included in the benchmark index.

Sensex, Nifty Extend Losing Streak to Four Sessions as Metals, Auto Stocks Weigh

New Delhi: Indian equity benchmarks ended lower for a fourth consecutive session on August 14, weighed down by selling in metal and automobile stocks, continued foreign fund outflows and uncertainty surrounding geopolitical developments in West Asia.

The BSE Sensex moved between gains and losses during the session, touching an intraday low of 77,684.37 before recovering some ground. The 30-share index eventually closed 70.71 points, or 0.09 per cent, lower at 78,009.25.

The NSE Nifty 50 also remained under pressure, falling to an intraday low of 24,296.80 before ending 29.85 points, or 0.12 per cent, down at 24,366.

Market breadth remained weak, with 39 of the 50 Nifty constituents closing in the red, while 10 stocks advanced and one remained unchanged. The decline came amid pressure on global base metal prices, with corrections in copper, zinc and aluminium weighing

particularly heavily on metal counters. Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles was the biggest loser among major stocks, declining 4.32 per cent. Jio Financial Services fell 2.56 per cent, while Asian Paints dropped 2.15 per cent. Hindalco Industries and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation also remained under pressure, declining 1.60 per cent and 1.46 per cent, respectively.

Gains in several heavy-weight stocks helped limit the broader market decline. Apollo Hospitals emerged as the strongest performer, rising 3.85 per cent. Bharti Airtel gained 2.73 per cent, while Adani Ports and Adani Enterprises advanced 2.53 per cent and 2.37 per cent, respectively. ICICI Bank added 0.73 per cent. Institutional activity remained a key factor influencing market sentiment. Foreign institutional investors sold equities worth Rs 510.69 crore on August 13, extending pressure from overseas fund outflows. Domestic institutional

investors, however, provided substantial support by making net purchases worth Rs 4,353.09 crore.

Macroeconomic developments also remained in focus after official data showed that India's wholesale price inflation eased marginally to 9.78 per cent in July from 9.87 per cent in June. Despite the moderation in the headline figure, inflation across primary articles and manufactured products remained elevated.

Global market signals were mixed. Japan's Nikkei 225 gained 0.75 per cent, while South Korea's Kospi advanced 2.36 per cent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng declined 1.17 per cent, while mainland Chinese equity markets remained largely unchanged.

The domestic market continued to face pressure from a combination of geopolitical uncertainty, foreign selling and weakness in commodity-linked stocks, resulting in another modest decline for the benchmark indices.

Digital Rupee Food Subsidy Transfers Launched in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli

Chandigarh: The Central government launched a programmable Digital Rupee-based Direct Benefit Transfer system for food subsidies under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana in Chandigarh on August 14, making the Union Territory the first to receive a full-scale rollout of the system. A parallel virtual launch was also held for Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

The initiative introduces purpose-bound Central Bank Digital Currency into the public food welfare system, allowing eligible beneficiaries to receive subsidy allocations directly in verified digital wallets. The system marks a shift from traditional physical distribution of foodgrains to conventional bank-based cash transfers and, subsequently, to digital currency restricted to specific wel-



fare purposes.

Under the new mechanism, the Digital Rupee received by beneficiaries is programmed exclusively for purchasing food and cannot be used for unrelated expenses. Beneficiaries can access their entitlements through designated fair price shops and authorised grain merchants by scanning merchant QR codes using mobile devices.

The system has been designed to support both smartphone and basic

mobile handset users, allowing a wider group of beneficiaries to participate in the digital subsidy programme.

Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria presided over the launch ceremony in the presence of Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Union Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Pralhad Joshi. Minister of State for Consumer Affairs Nimuben

Jayantibhai Bambhaniya and Chandigarh MP Manish Tewari also attended the event.

Joshi said the Central government spends more than Rs 2.10 lakh crore annually on national food assistance. He highlighted the potential of purpose-specific digital transfers to reduce intermediary involvement, limit leakage in welfare payments and create real-time records that can improve monitoring and auditing of government assistance.

Chouhan said the country's substantial foodgrain reserves would help maintain reliable supply chains and ensure that beneficiaries receive the food-related support for which the digital subsidy has been provided.

Chandigarh had previously been used as an early testing ground for reforms

in food subsidy delivery. In September 2015, the Union Territory moved from physical foodgrain distribution towards cash-based Direct Benefit Transfers.

The latest programme follows pilot exercises involving programmable digital currency in Gujarat, Puducherry and Chandigarh. The broader rollout is intended to strengthen transparency and accountability in welfare delivery while ensuring that food subsidies remain directed towards their intended purpose.

The introduction of purpose-bound Digital Rupee transfers represents a further expansion of digital technology in public welfare administration, with the government seeking to combine direct payments, controlled usage and improved monitoring within the food subsidy system.

Wholesale Inflation Eases Marginally to 9.78% in July on Softer Fuel Prices

New Delhi: India's wholesale price inflation moderated slightly to 9.78 per cent in July 2026 from 9.87 per cent in June, with a sharp decline in fuel and energy price pressures providing relief despite renewed increases in food, primary commodities and manufactured goods.

Data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on August 14 showed that the overall Wholesale Price Index (WPI) declined marginally to 110.0 in July from 110.2 in June. The limited movement in the headline inflation rate reflected a mixed trend across major components of the wholesale price basket, with lower energy costs being offset by stronger price pressures elsewhere in the economy.

The fuel and power category recorded the most significant moderation during the month. Inflation in the segment fell to 20.05 per cent in July from 27.41 per cent in June. Within the broader energy basket, mineral oil inflation declined sharply to 32.40 per cent from 46.48 per cent, while inflation in crude petroleum and natural gas



eased to 26.99 per cent from 34.75 per cent.

The decline in energy-related inflation helped contain the overall wholesale price index, but price pressures strengthened across primary articles. Inflation in primary articles increased to 8.52 per cent in July from 7 per cent in June.

Non-food articles recorded particularly strong price growth, with inflation rising to 17.66 per cent from 11.07 per cent in the previous month. Mineral prices also registered an increase of 13.28 per cent, adding to pressure within the primary commodities segment.

Manufactured products also experienced a rise in wholesale price pressures during July. Inflation in the manufacturing category climbed to 8.29 per cent from 7.48 per cent in June, indicating higher costs across several industrial inputs and finished products.

Chemical products recorded inflation of 13.12 per cent, while textiles registered 12.80 per cent. Basic metals and electrical equipment also reported elevated inflation of 12.56 per cent and 12.34 per cent, respectively. The increase across these categories contributed to higher fac-

tory-gate costs despite the moderation in fuel prices.

Food prices remained another source of pressure. The combined WPI Food Index, which carries a 24.99 per cent weight in the wholesale price basket and includes both primary food articles and manufactured food products, rose to 6.65 per cent in July from 6.14 per cent in June.

The increase in the food index was driven largely by processed food products, where inflation rose 8.89 per cent during the month. The development indicated that softer energy prices were not sufficient to fully offset rising wholesale

costs across food-related categories.

The government also revised its final WPI figures for May 2026. The index for the month was revised upward to 110.1 from the earlier provisional reading of 109.9. Following the revision, wholesale inflation for May was adjusted to 9.88 per cent from the initially reported 9.68 per cent.

The cumulative inflation rate for the April-July period of the current financial year stood at 9.47 per cent. This represented a substantial shift from the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year, when cumulative wholesale inflation had declined by 0.2 per cent.

The July data therefore showed a mixed inflation picture, with easing fuel costs providing some relief while higher prices for primary commodities, food products and manufactured goods continued to keep wholesale price pressures elevated. The marginal decline in the headline rate reflected the balancing impact of these contrasting movements across the major WPI components.

Man Industries Gains 6% After QatarEnergy Adds Firm to Preferred Vendor List



New Delhi: Shares of Man Industries (India) Ltd. rose as much as 6.34 per cent to Rs 614.40 on August 14 after the pipe manufacturer received vendor approval from QatarEnergy, strengthening its prospects of securing contracts in the Middle Eastern energy market.

The company was included in QatarEnergy's Preferred Manufacturers List for carbon steel Longitudinally Submerged Arc Welded (LSAW) pipes, specialised coatings and bends. The approval enables Man Industries to participate in bidding for large-diameter line pipe requirements linked to Qatar's expanding liquefied natural gas infrastructure and other major development projects.

The stock gained 5.82 per cent to Rs 611.35 in early trading, outperforming the broader market. At the time, the BSE Sensex was trading 0.37 per cent lower at around 77,799.

Man Industries Managing Director Nikhil Mansukhani said the empanelment represented formal recognition of the company's technical capabilities and manufacturing standards.

The approval is expected to provide the company with an opportunity to compete directly for upcoming energy-sector contracts across the Middle East.

The development also strengthens Man Industries' growing presence in the Gulf Cooperation Council region. The com-

pany has expanded its regional operations following the acquisition of National Pipe Company and the establishment of a dedicated pipe-coating facility in Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

Man Industries currently operates three manufacturing facilities located in Pithampur in Madhya Pradesh, Anjar in Gujarat and Saudi Arabia. Together, the facilities have an installed production capacity of more than 1.6 million metric tonnes per annum.

The QatarEnergy approval is expected to enhance the company's access to large-scale energy infrastructure opportunities in the region as Qatar continues to expand its LNG capacity and associated pipeline infrastructure.

Nigel Farage set for decisive but arguably empty victory in Clacton



will necessarily style the result as a clear endorsement of Farage’s record in the Essex seat, and of his tactic in calling the byelection, opponents will seize on any signs of a lower-than-expected majority or a slim turnout.

Farage is being investigated by the parliamentary standards watchdog over allegations he failed to declare gifts and donations, including a £5m gift from the crypto billionaire Christopher Harborne, first revealed by the Guardian.

The process was paused when he resigned as an MP, but will resume once he is re-elected. If he is found to have breached declaration rules and suspended from the House of Commons, this could trigger a second byelection, which the other

main parties would contest. While Farage insists he has relished a summer of knocking on doors in his constituency, he has been less visible on the national political stage – in part because of rules connected to how broadcasters must ensure balance during elections. Farage has insisted he did not need to declare the £5m from Harborne as it was given in advance of his return as Reform leader before the 2024 election. He has, however, given a series of explanations for the gift, including that it was for his security and a reward for Brexit. The parliamentary inquiry is also looking into allegations that Farage was financially supported by the crypto gambler and convicted fraudster George Cottrell, a close friend, after the Sunday Times reported that Cottrell’s support included security and social media staff who worked on Farage’s online content in the year before he was elected. The 34-candidate field in the Clacton byelection is a UK record, beating the July 2008 contest in Haltemprice and Howden, East Yorkshire, regained by the Conservative MP David Davis after he resigned his seat and stood again as a protest over civil liberties.

Nawaf Salam Condemns Israeli Operations in South Lebanon



Beirut: Tensions have escalated over Israeli military operations in southern Lebanon, with Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam strongly condemning what he described as the “systematic destruction” of homes, infrastructure and other civilian property in the region, calling it a serious violation of international law and international humanitarian law. In a statement, Salam said Israeli attacks and military incursions in southern Lebanon, along with the demolition of homes and the alleged systematic destruction of residential properties, infrastructure, government buildings and religious sites, ran contrary to the fundamental principles of international law. He also questioned Israel’s claim that villages and towns in the area had been designated as “military installations”. According to Salam, describing an area as a military zone cannot justify the destruction of homes, the displacement of residents or preventing people from returning to their communities. Meanwhile, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz visited southern Lebanon and said Israeli forces

would maintain their presence in what he described as a “security zone”. Katz claimed that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) were carrying out operations to destroy underground infrastructure in the area. He also confirmed that homes were being demolished in parts of southern Lebanon. Israel has maintained that its military operations in southern Lebanon are aimed at eliminating security threats and military infrastructure linked to Hezbollah. The Lebanese government, however, has alleged that the operations are having a serious impact on civilian populations and vital infrastructure. The contrasting positions have further heightened tensions over Israel’s military presence and activities in southern Lebanon.

UK economic growth slows down as Iran war pushes up energy prices



UK: Economic growth slowed in the second quarter of the year, as the disruption unleashed by the Iran war began to take its toll, official figures show. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said GDP expanded by 0.4% in the three months to June, down from 0.6% in the first quarter, in line with City economists’ expectations. The UK economy had been more resilient in the face of the ongoing Middle East conflict than some analysts feared. But the latest data suggests continued high energy prices are starting to weigh on growth. The news comes as the new chancellor, John Healey, prepares to present his first budget on 28

October. With energy prices remaining high, he could come under pressure to offer additional support to households this winter. Andy Burnham announced a VAT cut for electricity bills last month, but told the BBC on Wednesday that he would like to go further. “I can accept criticism that this isn’t enough, because I wouldn’t say it’s enough,” he said. Inflation figures for July will be published next week and are expected to show a higher reading than June’s 2.6%, reflecting rising utility bills. Sustained high inflation will increase pressure on the Bank of England to raise interest rates

Karoline Leavitt to Step Down as White House Press Secretary at Month-End

Washington: White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt will step down from her position at the end of August, President Donald Trump announced on Truth Social, saying that one of his most trusted aides would devote more time to her family and young children. Trump praised Leavitt’s performance and said he respected her decision. Trump said Leavitt was one of his most trusted advisers and would leave the White House at the end of the month to spend more time with her family and young children. He said she would continue to serve as one of his leading outside advisers and remain an influential voice within the Republican Party, including during the upcoming midterm elections. The President praised Leavitt’s leadership at the White House, saying she had been a strong advocate for his administration and its policies. He also credited her with playing an important role in his political campaigns and said she would be remembered as one of the outstanding press secretaries in White House history. Leavitt, 28, became the youngest person ever to serve as White House press secretary when she took the position during Trump’s second administration. She emerged as one of the President’s most prominent and trusted officials, frequently defending his policies and responding forcefully to questions from journalists. Her departure comes less than three



months before the 2026 US midterm elections, making the change a significant development for the Trump administration. The transition also comes at a politically challenging time for the President, amid concerns over foreign policy, energy prices and his approval ratings. Leavitt has played a prominent role in communicating the administration’s agenda, both from the White House briefing room and through social media. She was also known for maintaining an active relationship with reporters while regularly engaging in contentious exchanges over questions concerning Trump and his policies. Following Trump’s announcement, Leavitt said on social media that returning to the White House after the birth of her daughter had made her realise she needed to reassess what it

meant to be the best mother she could be. She described her decision to leave as bittersweet, reflecting both her attachment to the administration and her desire to prioritise her family. Leavitt gave birth to her daughter, Viviana, in May and had taken maternity leave before returning to the White House. She had previously become a mother in July 2024 and had taken only a short period away from work at that time. During her tenure, Leavitt frequently highlighted her family life alongside her demanding responsibilities at the White House. She has spoken publicly about balancing her career with motherhood and has occasionally brought her young son to Air Force One and the Oval Office. Before becoming White House press secretary, Leavitt worked as a spokesperson for Trump’s 2024 presidential campaign and had also served in his first administration. She ran unsuccessfully for Congress in New Hampshire after Trump’s first term before becoming a prominent figure in his 2024 campaign. With the 2026 midterm elections approaching, Leavitt could continue to play an important role as an outside political adviser and Republican communicator. She has said she will remain a supporter of the Republican Party. The White House has not yet announced who will succeed Leavitt as press secretary.

China, Kimi K3 and WAICO: Can Beijing win the AI race and make the rules too?

China has made no secret of its AI ambitions. Back in 2017, its Next Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan set out its goal of becoming the ‘world’s primary AI innovation centre’ by 2030. Now, Beijing is fleshing out a crucial dimension to the plan. Backed by the technological excellence of the latest Chinese models, China is articulating a vision for what principles should underpin how AI works and how it should be governed globally. But without the impressive AI models that have gained a broad following around the world, Beijing’s overtures to lead AI governance would lack traction. The symbiosis between its development of frontier AI models and Beijing’s governance push was on display in the run up to the launch of the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization (WAICO) in Shanghai last month. Just before the conference opened, Moonshot AI’s Kimi K3 – a powerful Large Language Model (LLM) with 2.8 trillion parameters – was launched. The model is open weight, meaning that

it can be downloaded and modified by users to serve their specific purposes. This makes a contrast with LLMs owned by US companies like OpenAI, Google and Anthropic, which are closed weight – meaning they cannot be downloaded and modified. Kimi K3 is currently ranked in the top three on the Vals Index after two Claude LLMs, taking the Chinese model to the forefront of global AI tech. For potential users around the world, this is an attractive offer. The Chinese model provides cutting-edge performance with an open-weight format – and can be operated much more cheaply (per million output tokens) than the leading US models. Such structural advantages underpin China’s AI diplomacy as well as its bid to be a rule-setter by creating institutions such as WAICO. The overtures that China made at the conference in Shanghai leave no doubt that its strategy is to woo the countries of the Global South and use their agency to help set the norms and rules that govern AI internationally.

India fuels worldwide jump in planned coal production

Odisha: Enough new coalmining projects were proposed last year to increase global supplies by 2.5bn tonnes a year, an increase of 11% from the year before, even as demand for coal plateaus, according to a new report. Global Energy Monitor, an NGO, found that India ignited a rise in new coalmine proposals in 2025 despite a global slowdown in the number of mine openings because of falling demand for the fossil fuel. The increase was driven almost entirely by the states of Jharkhand and Odisha, which doubled their proposals for new coalmines in line with an ambitious plan from India’s ministry of coal to increase the country’s output. India plans to

increase its coal production by nearly 100m tonnes to 1.15bn tonnes in the 2025-26 fiscal year to help meet the country’s rising demand for electricity to support economic growth and contend with heatwaves, which have become more severe and more frequent because of the climate crisis. The planned increases come despite signs that the world is beginning to turn its back on coal in favour of renewable electricity, Global Energy Monitor said. Coalmine proposals slowed in the years after the Covid-19 pandemic but have begun to climb again, raising concerns that mining could increase in the future despite a slowdown in the number of new facilities.



The startup of new coalmining projects has fallen steadily in recent years, according to the Global Energy Monitor’s latest report. It found that enough new

coalmines to produce about 113m tonnes each year began operations last year, down by 40% from 2024, which was already the lowest annual total in a decade. This was largely owing to a slowdown in new mines in China and Australia, which fell by 44% and 96% respectively. Global Energy Monitor warned that India’s rise in new mine proposals was at odds with the slowdown in global coal demand predicted by the International Energy Agency for the end of the decade. Wind and solar power surpassed coal generation in the global electricity mix for the first time last year, according to a separate report from energy thinktank Ember, in a

“milestone moment” for climate action. China and India were largely responsible for the rise in renewables, according to the Ember report, while the US and Europe continued to rely more heavily on fossil fuels. Tiffany Means, a senior researcher at Global Energy Monitor and co-author of the report said: “The economic rationale for expanding coalmining becomes progressively weaker as low-cost clean energy continues to displace coal. “Rather than locking in decades of additional coal production, governments have an opportunity to cancel projects that remain in the development pipeline before they advance to construction.”

When making chai and coffee with dates, is jaggery better than white sugar

Replacing a spoonful of refined white sugar with raw jaggery in your morning chai or adding medjool dates to your espresso exemplifies the on-going quest for ‘guilt-free’ sweetness that has gained traction in modern wellness culture. However, does substituting table sugar with natural alternatives truly safeguard your health, or are we simply masking the same caloric challenges? Many individuals believe that unrefined sweeteners provide immunity against diabetes and weight gain. Dr. Patil asserts that while the source may differ, the body’s reaction to added sugar remains unchanged. The familiar post-snack energy surge followed by fatigue and renewed hunger serves as evidence of this. She also addresses the increasing inquiries regarding zero-calorie and artificial sweeteners — do they alter when heated, and are they safe for regular cooking and baking? 1. Is it possible to sweeten my coffee with dates instead of sugar, and which type of dates should I choose?

A. Yes, you can use dates to sweeten your coffee instead of refined sugar. Dates are naturally sweet and also contain small amounts of fibre, potassium, magnesium and antioxidants. They do, however, still contain natural sugars, so watch your portion size. Medjool dates are especially good for coffee because they are soft, naturally caramelised and sweeter, so you need less. You can blend ½- 1 small date into your coffee or make a date paste for easier mixing. For those who prefer something less sweet, Deglet Noor dates are a good option. Just remember that swapping sugar for dates doesn’t make your coffee “sugar-free”, just a more nutrient-dense sweetening option.

2. Is regular sugar really worse for me than natural options like honey or maple syrup?

A. All regular sugar, honey, and maple syrup are all types of added sugar, so none of them should be considered entirely “healthy”. Honey and maple syrup provide small amounts of antioxidants and minerals, but the nutritional differences are small, especially at typical serving sizes. You still get sugars, which can lead to tak-

ing in too many calories and impact blood glucose when you eat them often or in large amounts. The better way to approach this is to focus on quantity and frequency rather than swapping sweeteners. If you enjoy honey or maple syrup, use them sparingly and go for minimally processed options. Whole fruits are a more nutrient-rich choice for everyday sweetness.3. Why do I feel an energy crash after eating sugary foods, and how do I prevent it?

A. Sugary foods cause a rapid rise in blood glucose, followed by a large insulin response and a blood glucose crash. This could leave you feeling tired, hungry, irritable or unfocused. To reduce these fluctuations, don’t eat sugary foods on their own. Combine carbs with protein, healthy fats, or fibre, such as fruit, nuts, or yoghurt. Eat whole fruit instead of juice. Cut back on refined sweets and sugary drinks. Eat whole fruit instead of juice. Avoid refined sweets and sugary drinks. Eat regularly. balanced meals. You can also drink water, get enough sleep and exercise to help maintain steadier energy levels throughout the day.4. What really happens chemically when you heat up artificial sweeteners in your morning tea, coffee, or baked goods like cakes and biscuits? A. Artificial sweeteners do not undergo one universal chemical reaction when heated.

It depends on the particular sweetener. Some, such as sucralose, are relatively heat-stable but may undergo chemical degradation under some high-temperature conditions. Aspartame is less heat-stable and can break down during prolonged heating. Other sweeteners like saccharin, acesulfame-K and steviol glycosides generally have better heat stability. Temperature, moisture, acidity and cooking time all affect stability in baked foods.

So check the manufacturer’s suggested use for cooking or baking. For everyday tea or coffee, it is usually preferable to use a suitable heat-stable sweetener in moderate amounts rather than assuming that all artificial sweeteners are the same.5. What is the easiest way to spot hidden sugars on packaged food labels?

A. The quickest way to catch hidden sugars is to read the ingredient list, not just glance at the front of the package. Watch for names like sucrose, glucose, fructose, dextrose, maltose, corn syrup, rice syrup, malt syrup, honey, jaggery, and fruit concentrates. Since ingredients are listed by weight, seeing several sugar sources near the top indicates the product likely contains a good amount. The nutrition panel’s ‘total sugars’ and ‘added sugars’ lines are worth checking too. Don’t fall for claims like ‘natural’, ‘organic’, or ‘no refined sugar’ – none of those mean the item is sugar-free. A simple trick is to compare similar options and pick the one with less added sugar and more fibre or protein. 6. Will switching to jaggery or coconut sugar help lower my risk of diabetes?

Substituting jaggery and coconut sugar for refined sugar does not reduce your risk of diabetes significantly. Yes, jaggery and coconut sugar contain some minerals, and their impact on blood glucose may differ, but they still have a lot of sugar and calories. The problem is that regularly consuming large amounts of any type of added sugar will increase your daily calorie intake and impair your ability to regulate your blood glucose levels.

However, what really counts is not the type of food but its overall quality and portion size, exercise, proper weight, sufficient sleep, and, when possible, reducing added sugar consumption. If jaggery and coconut sugar are your favourites, you are free to consume them from time to time in moderate quantities. Just don’t consider them a protection against diabetes.

7. Are zero-calorie artificial sweeteners bad for my long-term health?

Artificial sweeteners that contain zero calories are not necessarily harmful for good health. Certain approved sweeteners, such as stevia, sucralose, aspartame, and acesulfame-K, are deemed safe for consumption within the prescribed acceptable daily intake range. Nonetheless, scientific information regarding their long-term effects is still being discovered, especially with regard to the gut mi-



crobiota, appetite, and metabolism. Certain studies have linked the use of artificial sweeteners to certain diseases; nevertheless, this does not mean that artificial sweeteners are responsible for these conditions. For most people, they could serve as a way to reduce added sugar consumption.

8. How much sugar or sweetener is actually safe to eat every day?

While there is no universal safe quantity of sugar or sweeteners that can be consumed by everybody, added sugar consumption needs to be minimised. According to the WHO (World Health Orgasination), total consumption of free sugars needs to be maintained at less than 10 percent of energy intake, which can also be reduced to less than 5 percent – about 25 grams or 6 teaspoons of sugar per day – for greater health benefits when following a 2,000-calorie-per-day diet. Free sugars include sugar, honey, syrups and sugars from sweetened products. The safety of each individual type of non-sugar sweetener de-

pends on the acceptable daily intake.

9. Can transitioning to ‘healthy’ natural sugars help curb sugar dependency, or do they trigger the same cravings as processed sugar?

Switching to ‘natural’ sweeteners such as honey, jaggery, maple syrup, or coconut sugar may feel like a healthier transition, but they still contain sugars and can maintain a preference for sweet tastes. They are metabolised differently in some respects, but they can still stimulate reward pathways associated with sweet foods and may reinforce cravings when consumed frequently. The better strategy is to gradually reduce the overall sweetness of your diet. Try using smaller amounts of sweeteners, choosing whole fruits for sweetness, and pairing carbohydrates with protein and fibre to improve satiety. Over time, your taste buds can adapt, making naturally less-sweet foods more satisfying. 10. What is the healthiest way to add a bit of sweetness to my food or drinks without using table

sugar?

The best way out is to cut down on your sweet tooth rather than finding other ways of making something sweet. Natural sources of sweetness include whole fruits such as bananas, berries, apples, dates or ripe mango. In dishes such as oatmeal, yoghurt, juices, and desserts, one can use fruit as a source of sweetness along with fibre and vitamins. For drinks, one could add a little cinnamon, vanilla, cardamom, or unsweetened cocoa to increase their sweetness without adding any sugar. One may also use a small amount of stevia to keep the calories low.

About the expert

Dr Rohini Patil is an MBBS doctor, clinical nutritionist, author, and entrepreneur with more than nine years of experience in metabolic and lifestyle health. She focuses on women’s health, weight management, and preventive nutrition, and is the founder and CEO of NutracY Lifestyle and NutracY Academy.

Eight signs that your innerwear may be the wrong size



A bra is an essential item in a woman’s wardrobe. It offers crucial support, enhances comfort, and facilitates greater ease of movement during the day. Although many women wear one daily, they may unknowingly select the incorrect size or style for their bodies. A bra is not a universal garment; it is available in various sizes, shapes, materials, and designs, each tailored to accommodate different body types, outfits, and daily requirements. Therefore, how can you determine if your bra fits properly, or has it been quietly causing you discomfort?

An expert weighed in on the common innerwear mistakes many women make. Bhavesh Trevadia, director at Juliet Apparels, shared insights into the signs of an ill-fitting bra and how to find the right size and style for different needs. Why do women wear the wrong bra size? Bhavesh revealed an

alarming observation that many women continue wearing the wrong bra size without realising. Sharing the reasons behind, he said, “Some wear the same size for years despite weight changes, pregnancy, hormonal shifts, or ageing, while others focus only on the band size and overlook the cup size. Limited access to professional bra-fitting services, prioritising style or price over comfort and support, and not knowing how a well-fitted bra should feel may also contribute to the problem.”

This means women should reassess both their band and cup measurements periodically instead of treating their bra size as permanent. What are the bra-shopping mistakes that can compromise fit and support?

A poorly fitted bra goes beyond concerns about appearance, as it can also affect your comfort, movement, and posture. Here are some common mistakes

Bhavesh highlighted:

Choosing a band that is too loose because it feels softer at first.Picking a smaller cup size to create a tighter fit. Not adjusting the shoulder straps correctly.Using stretched-out or worn bras long after they have lost support.What are the signs that you are wearing the wrong bra?

Next, if certain fitting issues occur regularly, it may signal that the size, shape, or style of your bra needs to be changed. Bhavesh listed the following signs to watch out for:

Shoulder straps slip off or dig into the skin.The back band rides up instead of staying level.Breast tissue spills over the top or sides of the cups. Cups wrinkle, gape, or do not sit smoothly.

The centre front panel does not lie flat against the chest.Underwire pokes, pinches, or rests on the breast.The bra needs constant adjusting during the day.Red marks, discomfort, or pain appear after a few hours of wear. How to measure your bra size at home?

You don’t always require a professional fitting, as bra size can also be checked right at home. All you need is a measuring tape. The expert, however, reminded that sizing can vary from brand to brand, so ensure you check the bra’s size chart before buying. Here’s a step-by-step guide from

the expert on how to check:

Step 1: Measure the band size

Wear a non-padded bra or no bra.

Wrap a measuring tape snugly around the rib cage, just below the bust.Make sure the tape stays straight and level all the way around.

Note the measurement in inches.

Step 2: Measure the bust Measure around the fullest part of the bust.Keep the tape comfortably loose and parallel to the floor.

Record the measurement.

Step 3: Calculate the cup size

The difference between the bust and band measurements helps determine the cup size.A bra is also occasion-based. Every

type of wear, occasion, and outfit requires different innerwear in terms of construction, support, and fabric. This means that innerwear is closely associated with purpose. Bhavesh confirmed this and added that different activities and needs, from exercise and occasion wear to maternity and sleep, require different types of support.

In the end, the expert’s parting advice is that women should reassess their bra size every 6–12 months or whenever their bodies undergo significant changes, such as pregnancy, breastfeeding, menopause, or weight changes.

Incorporating these fruits into your diet may lead to radiant skin

Skincare encompasses not only the products applied to the face but also the nutrition consumed internally. This is why individuals ranging from our parents to dermatologists recommend maintaining a balanced and nutritious diet abundant in fruits and vital nutrients. I consulted with dermatologists and skincare specialists regarding the advantages of fruits for skin health, and here are a few fruits you should consider incorporating into your daily diet for radiant, healthy skin.

“Healthy skin is influenced not only by the skincare products we use but also by the nutrition we get through our daily diet”, Dr Kanika Popli, Dermatologist and Founder of Kanayaa Skincare, tells HT Shop Now.

She further mentions, “Fruits such as papaya, oranges, berries and watermelon are rich in antioxidants and vitamins, which support the skin’s natural functions, help maintain hydration and contribute to a healthier-looking complexion”.

She also says that these fruits have a high water content, which helps support the skin’s natural moisture balance and barrier function. “These nutrients also play a role in supporting collagen production and helping the skin manage everyday environmental stress”, she claims.

In fact, she clarifies that vitamin C is essential for collagen synthesis, a process that helps maintain the skin’s structure and overall health. At the same time, healthy skin is not the result of a single fruit or ingredient. It comes from consistency in daily habits, including a balanced diet, adequate hydration, quality sleep, sun protection and a skincare routine suited to an individual’s skin type. Dr Popli also mentions, “In my view, a balanced approach to nutrition and skincare is what helps maintain healthy, resilient and naturally radiant skin over time”.

Shaily Mehrotra, CEO and Co-Founder, Fixderma and FCL, also adds to it, “Natural” and “chemical” are often spoken about as if they are opposites, but that is not how I look at skincare”.

She says, “Nature itself is chemistry. Fruit-based skincare has always had a strong consumer appeal, but I believe we need to look beyond the idea that if something comes from a fruit, it is automatically better for our skin. What matters is the science behind the ingredient and how it is formulated”.

“We see this across our range, from strawberry extract in a Strawberry Face Wash and orange extract in a Vitamin C Face Wash to fruit-derived AHAs in Pee-lonate; each ingredient has a specific role to play”, she tells. These ingredients can offer antioxidant support, help improve skin texture and contribute to brighter, healthier-looking skin. The opportunity for the industry is to combine the familiarity of nature with the rigour of science. That is where fruit-based skincare becomes genuinely meaningful, not as a trend, but as purposeful formulation.”

It is all due to the positive effects of fruits that many skincare brands have started to include fruit-rich skincare products, especially face washes.

Benefits of fruits for glowing skin Rich in antioxidants: Fruits such as berries, grapes and pomegranates contain antioxidants that help protect skin from oxidative stress.

Boosts collagen support: Vitamin C-rich fruits like oranges, guava, kiwi and strawberries support normal collagen production, which helps maintain skin firmness.

Keeps skin hydrated: Water-rich fruits such as watermelon, oranges, muskmelon and strawberries contribute to daily fluid intake.

Supports a brighter complexion: Regularly eating a variety of fruits provides vitamins and plant compounds that support

overall skin health.

Helps fight dullness: Nutrient-dense fruits provide vitamins and minerals that can support healthy-looking skin.

Supports digestion: Fruits provide dietary fibre, which supports healthy digestion and regular bowel movements.

Provides essential nutrients: Fruits supply nutrients such as vitamin C, vitamin A precursors, potassium and folate that contribute to overall wellbeing and skin health.

How to include fruits in your daily diet

Start your morning with fruit: Add banana, apple, papaya or berries to breakfast.

Make a fruit bowl: Combine 2–3 seasonal fruits for a simple mid-morning or evening snack.

Add fruits to yoghurt: Mix chopped apple, pomegranate, berries or banana with plain yoghurt.

Blend a smoothie: Combine fruit with milk or yoghurt. Try banana with yoghurt or berries with milk.

Add fruit to salads: Toss pomegranate, orange segments, apple or pear into a vegetable salad.

Keep whole fruits handy: Store washed, ready-to-eat fruits where you can easily reach them instead of relying on packaged snacks.

Choose seasonal fruits: Seasonal options are usually an easy and affordable way to add variety to your diet.

Eat whole fruit more often than juice: Whole fruits provide fibre and are generally more filling than fruit juice.

Vary your choices: Instead of eating the same fruit every day, rotate between citrus fruits, berries, melons, apples, papaya, guava and other seasonal options.

Simple tip: Aim for variety rather than relying on one “beauty fruit”. A balanced diet with different fruits, vegetables, protein, whole grains, healthy fats and enough water is a better approach to supporting healthy, glowing skin.

Prahaar new release date announced: Rajkummar Rao, Wamiqa Gabbi biopic



Mumbai : Rajkummar Rao's upcoming biopic on public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam titled 'Prahaar' has got a new release date. Maddock Films announced the new release date on its Instagram handle on Thursday. The film is now scheduled to release on October 16. The film was earlier slated to re-

lease on August 7. The movie is directed by Avinash Arun, known for 'Paatal Lok' and 'Three of Us'. It is produced by Dinesh Vijan under the Maddock Films banner. The official teaser of 'Prahaar' was released in June, offering the first glimpse of Rajkummar Rao in a powerful transformation as celebrated Indi-

an public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam.

The teaser introduces viewers to a tense and investigative world, built around a wall covered with case files, photographs and notes linked to "Terror in Mumbai: City Under Siege." The visuals focus on the pursuit of truth and justice, while highlighting the long-awaited resolution surrounding the hanging of Ajmal Kasab. Rajkummar Rao steps into the role of Nikam, the prosecutor known for handling several high-profile cases.

However, 'Prahaar' places significant emphasis on the trial of Ajmal Kasab, the lone surviving terrorist involved in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks. The teaser positions

the case as a battle beyond the courtroom, underscored by the line: "Killing Kasab was easy, proving who sent him was war."

The project also features Wamiqa Gabbi, Jaideep Ahlawat and Sikander Kher in key roles. One of the major talking points surrounding the film is Rao's physical transformation. To portray Nikam, the actor gained approximately 9-10 kilograms and adopted a heavier build, stubble, glasses and a commanding grasp of Marathi. Meanwhile, Rajkummar Rao will also be seen in the biopic of former cricketer Sourav Ganguly, which is titled 'Dada - The Sourav Ganguly Story.' The film is slated to release in theatres on May 14, 2027.

Gauahar Khan reveals family opposition to Zaid Darbar marriage over age difference



Mumbai : Gauahar Khan and Zaid Darbar have a 6-year age gap, and as such, their families did not want them to get married. The couple recently appeared on Neha Dhupia and Angad Bedi's podcast and recounted their love story. They detailed how Zaid first slid into Gauahar's DMs and lied about his age. They also revealed their reaction to family opposition to their marriage.

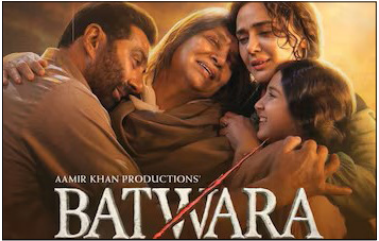
Zaid recalled his first encounter with Gauahar and said, "I saw her, but I didn't talk to her at the supermarket during the pandemic. I thought that she must've seen me, but she didn't. I was trying to get her attention, but Gauahar's house help noticed it, instead of her. She was in my head even after that, so I finally DMed her." The actress said, "I replied to his flirty text, and then just after 4-5 sentences of exchange, he said, 'Don't get married.' When I asked his age, he said 24. I asked him to exit this chat right away. I was in the rebellion phase of keeping men

away from me. He got scared suddenly and admitted that he was lying about his age because he thought I was 26. He then sent his passport and Aadhaar card, and I realised he was 29, so there was a 6-year age gap. Even today, paps think that we have a 10-year gap."

"He proposed marriage to me within one month, and the families opposed the idea. They even raised questions regard-

ing the age gap. We were very clear that if anyone has any issues in coming to the wedding, they can skip it. But the nikah was perfect. I didn't expect him to cry, but he did during my entry," Gauahar recalled. Zaid added, "I didn't stop for around 10 minutes. I couldn't stop after looking at her." Gauahar and Zaid got married on December 25, 2020, in the presence of their close friends and family members.

Sunny Deol & Shabana Azmi anchor a soulful 'Batwara 1947'



Mumbai : 2026 has been a pivotal year for films returning to one of the darkest chapters in South Asian history: Partition. After Imtiaz Ali's moving ode Main Vaapas Aunga, Rajkumar Santoshi now arrives with his cinematic interpretation of Asgar Wajahat's celebrated play Jinne Lahore Ni Vekhya Woh Jameya Hi Nahi. Headlined by Sunny Deol, Preity Zinta, Ali Fazal, Karan Deol, Abhimanyu Singh and others, this Aamir Khan production may not be perfect and does carry uneven edges in its adaptation, but at its core, the film feels authentic, earnest and painfully human. It offers a poignant, classically mounted take on a play that has been performed by thespians across stages for years.

The film opens with Sikandar Mirza, played by Sunny Deol, preparing to celebrate India's very first Independence Day. Despite the danger of being caught in the crossfire of violence, Sikandar remains optimistic that no harm will come to him or his family. He believes, with

almost childlike conviction, that Mahatma Gandhi would never allow a riot-like situation to unfold. More than that, he is determined to stay in the country whose freedom he fought for. He owns a factory and is preparing for Independence Day, unaware of the peril that is beginning to sharpen its teeth around him.

Back at Sikandar's house, his wife Hamida, played by Preity Zinta, his daughter Tanno, played by Khushi Hajare, and his son Javed are equally unaware of the storm gathering in their village. Sikandar's friend Rashid pleads with him to leave for Lahore along with his family, but Sikandar refuses to abandon Meerut. However, as night begins to draw closer, the situation in the city worsens, with mobs targeting Muslims in the neighbourhood. Seeing danger now standing at his doorstep, Sikandar goes around knocking on doors, asking for refuge. But nobody comes forward to help him. With the mob advancing, Sikandar, along with his family, Rashid and Rashid's family, leaves for the railway station, where a train to Lahore is expected to depart any moment. Even in that terrifying situation, Hamida assures her daughter that she can leave her books behind, because they will return once the violence subsides. But to their horror, as they make their way towards the station, they see a violent mob setting their house on fire.

At the railway station, the anxious and terrified crowd is desperate to get onto the train, which is already overflowing with people. Amid the commotion, a mob armed with swords and petrol bombs attacks and brutalises people on the train. They even barge into the engine room to kill the driver, but Sikandar fights them off valiantly. While Hamida and Tanno manage to get on the train, Sikandar's son Javed, as well as Rashid's family, are left behind. Once they reach Lahore, we see Sikandar taking care of his family at a relief camp while trying to find a roof over their heads. However, with refugees pouring in from all corners, approximately 40 lakh Muhajirs, the allocation of houses is taking a great deal of time. That is when Habib Anwar, played by Ali Fazal, a poet and presenter at Lahore Radio, steps up to help Sikandar by offering him the haveli allotted to him.

Finally, Sikandar has a roof for himself and his family. His son is still missing, but he is relieved that at least he now has a house. The sprawling mansion has a lovely courtyard, with the traditional Tulsi plant standing in the middle of it like a remnant of another life. Sikandar's daughter even remarks that this house is far bigger than their previous home in Meerut. As she goes about exploring the mansion, she finds an old woman already living inside.

Yash opens up about KGF's direct showdown with Shah Rukh Khan's zero

Mumbai : Yash, who is currently busy promoting his upcoming film, Toxic, has now opened up about the 2018 box-office clash between his film KGF: Chapter 1 and Shah Rukh Khan's Zero. Looking back, the actor said he never saw the release as a competition with the Bollywood superstar. According to Yash, KGF was the smaller film at the time, while Zero was backed by the massive star power of Shah Rukh Khan. Despite the eventual box-office outcome, Yash maintained that the two films were never viewed as equals from his side.

During his appearance on Aap Ki Adalat, Yash was asked if releasing KGF: Chapter 1 alongside Shah Rukh Khan's Zero was a deliberate move. The question also touched upon his long-standing admiration for SRK, with the actor acknowledging that he re-

mains a fan of the Bollywood superstar. The host asked, "Aap Shah Rukh Khan ke bahut bade fan hain, aap unse milna chahte the and jab time nahi diya toh aapne unki Zero ke saath apni KGF film clash kara li." The actor replied, "Our film was a small one and Shah Rukh sir's film was huge, so we released on the same day."

Both KGF: Chapter 1 and Shah Rukh's Zero arrived in theatres on December 21, 2018, resulting in one of the more talked-about clashes of that year. While Zero had the advantage of Shah Rukh's immense star power and widespread anticipation, KGF emerged as the surprise winner, going on to



establish Yash as a pan-India name. Zero, meanwhile, struggled to make a similar impact at the box office. At the time, KGF eventually crossed the ₹100 crore mark worldwide within its first week and continued its successful run, while Zero had a comparatively underwhelming theatrical performance.

However, Yash does not appear to view the out-

come as proof that he has surpassed SRK. Reflecting on the clash years later, he stressed that KGF was a much smaller film compared with Zero and maintained that Shah Rukh remains a superstar and a senior he deeply respects. He said, "He is a superstar and the day I think that my seniors, unse main bada hoon, uss din meri dukaan band."

Munawar Faruqui calls the traitors 2 rivals 'insecure' after elimination

Mumbai : For Munawar Faruqui, his stint on The Traitors Season 2 ended almost as soon as it began. The comedian, who has previously emerged victorious from Lock Upp Season 1 and Bigg Boss 17, found himself at the centre of suspicion during the very first Circle of Shaq. In an exclusive interview with CNN-News18, Munawar said that the other contestants had already made up their minds about him because of his popularity and reputation as a strong reality-show player.

Looking back at his early exit, Munawar said he felt he was targeted simply because everyone saw him as a formidable player. "I was on an even bigger level than a Traitor on that show. That's why all of them decided to eliminate me first," he said. According to him, his name had become a constant topic of conversation inside the show, with contestants repeatedly discussing how much attention he was getting. "Har jagah mera naam aa raha tha, everyone was talking about



me. Some even thought they would not get footage because of Munawar," he recalled.

Munawar admitted that he was particularly disappointed

by what he felt were weak reasons being given for his elimination. "They were giving nonsense logic. Shehnaaz Gill also gave some example

of a Traitor while comparing me, which was the worst thing. There was no logic at all in the way they were trying to oust me," he said. He believes insecurity played a major role in the decision. "Everyone was talking about me. I was very upset because I wanted to play the game and that too, very well. Bhale main jeetu ya na jeetu, but I was hurt about getting evicted in the first episode itself. Bahut bharosa toota mera."

Before his elimination, Munawar had also tried to turn

the vote against Mallika Sherawat. He said her behaviour stood out to him and that she had already begun building her own alliance within the game. "Mallika's behaviour was so different than the others and her name was anyway coming up all the time. She had also formed a group of her own of five-six people in the game and I knew they were going to target me," he said. Munawar clarified that he wasn't necessarily convinced that Mallika was a Traitor, but saw removing her as a strategic way to

improve his own chances of survival. "I was trying to convince people to vote her out even though I wasn't sure about her being a Traitor. I thought it was easier for me to stay in the game if I threw her out." As for his equation with host Karan Johar, Munawar said there was little interaction beyond what viewers saw on the show. "What you see on screen is the exact amount of time we all spent with him. No extra hi or hello. He was very professional," he said, adding that the distance was under-

standable given Karan's role in the game. "It makes sense also because of the role he was playing in the game."

After Episode 3, the contestants still in the game are Aaditya Kulshreshth (Kullu), Abhishek Malhan (Fukraa Insaan), Ansh Chopra, Ikka Singh, Krystle D'Souza, Mallika Sherawat, Parul Gulati, Prish and Ranveer Brar. Rhea Chakraborty, Rida Tharana, Sahil Salathia, Shahneel Gill, Shalini Passi, Shweta Tiwari and Tanya Puri have also managed to stay safe so far.

Shriya Saran speaks out on Emraan Hashmi starrer Awarapan's failure



Mumbai : The Mohit Suri directorial Awarapan, featuring Emraan Hashmi, Shriya Saran and Mrinalini Sharma, failed to make a strong impact at the box office when it first released in 2007. However, the film found a second life over the years and gradually earned a loyal cult following. As Awarapan 2 gears up for release nearly two decades later, Shriya has opened up about her experience with the original. In a recent conversation, the actress recalled feeling disappointed by the film's initial response and revealed that she was left out of some award functions even though

Awarapan had received nominations.

While speaking to Pinkvilla, Shriya Saran looked back at the film's box office failure. She said, "When the film came out, we all had lots of hopes for it. But I don't know why; I think it was ahead of its time. It was even nominated in some award shows, and they didn't send me an invite. It was like that. And Awarapan is a movie which I felt would be celebrated; people would love it. So when something like that happens, you kind of feel very disheartened."

She reflected on how Awarapan found a loyal au-

dience over the years. She recalled that viewers continued to approach her and express their love for the film, despite its disappointing theatrical run, making her realise that its emotional impact had endured far beyond its box-office numbers. Shriya added, "So then, for the longest time, I thought maybe it was the songs they loved, because the songs were amazing and Emraan was amazing. But now, you know, I feel like people loved the story. They kind of felt it. Because it's a very intense, intense story. So people really felt it. Otherwise, the amount of love they're still giving it, the amount they're giving to it even now, it wouldn't be like that. It wouldn't be."

Amid the growing cult following of Awarapan, the second instalment is now set to hit theatres on August 14. Emraan will reprise his role as Shivam Pandit, while Disha Patani and Shabana Azmi join the franchise as new additions to the cast.

Beyond redemption: how Emraan Hashmi's broken hero drives 'Awarapan 2'

Mumbai : Nineteen years after Awarapan introduced audiences to the broken and brooding Shivam Pandit, Emraan Hashmi is back in the role. Awarapan 2, directed by Nitin Kakkar, released on August 14, 2026. This time, Shivam is older, more scarred and still carrying the grief of losing Aaliyah. Awarapan 2 leans heavily into that emotional baggage while turning Shivam loose in a brutal new world of crime and trafficking. What we get is a film filled with action sequences that impress us mainly because of Emraan Hashmi.

Directed by Nitin Kakkar, Awarapan 2 picks up with Shivam still haunted by Aaliyah Hamid (Shriya Saran), whose death continues to define him. His life takes a new turn when he becomes attached to a young orphan girl, who he names Aaliyah after finding her abandoned in a graveyard. When she

gets caught in a dangerous trafficking racket, Shivam travels to Bangkok and infiltrates a criminal network to find her. His mission brings him face-to-face with Zorawar (Puran Gabbi), a ruthless criminal, and Zara (Disha Patani), who belongs to the same world but eventually finds herself on Shivam's side. There is also Nafisa (Shabana Azmi), another villain in the underworld.

The premise gives Shivam a strong emotional reason to return to violence. The idea of him finding another Aaliyah to protect is perhaps the sequel's smartest connection to the original. However, the screenplay isn't always as sharp. Some twists are fairly easy to predict. Emraan Hashmi remains the soul of Awarapan 2. He doesn't try to recreate the younger Shivam from 2007; instead, he plays him as a man who has lived with his pain for

nearly two decades. In him, you find that exhaustion which works beautifully for the character. Emraan often lets his eyes and expressions communicate what the dialogues don't. And when Shivam finally snaps, the transition from wounded man to ruthless fighter feels convincing.

There are moments when the film's criminal-underworld setup may remind you of Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar, particularly when Shivam enters a dangerous network and has to navigate violent men while operating from within their world. But Awarapan 2 is ultimately far more personal. Disha Patani looks every bit the glamorous action heroine, but her character Zara deserved a much stronger character arc. She is part of Zorawar's world, grows closer to Shivam and eventually turns against her own side, but the writing doesn't give her



enough emotional depth. The romance between her and Shivam consequently doesn't have the impact the film seems to want. She is left to be a mere eye candy with pretty clothes.

As for Shabana Azmi, we weren't entirely convinced by the mafia-leader persona she carried. The film tells us that she is powerful and feared, yet it doesn't always make us feel that power. However, it's the writing that should be blamed not their performances. Pu-

ran Gabbi, meanwhile, is a pleasant surprise as Zorawar. He makes the character genuinely menacing and manages to create the kind of villain audiences actually love to hate. Apart from Emraan, he is probably the actor carrying the film on his shoulders. And it is exactly why filmmakers need to keep giving newcomers chances. Sometimes you discover someone who can walk into a film opposite a major star and make you sit up.

“We Recall The Courage” PM Modi On Remembrance Day of the Partition Horrors



New Delhi, Aug 14: On Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi observed Partition Horrors Remembrance Day, honoring those who perished during the Partition and remembering the bravery of those who rebuilt their lives in spite of severe loss and dislocation.PM Modi said, “Today is Partition Horrors Remembrance Day,” in a post on X.We honor the bravery of everyone affected by Partition. Families were uprooted, loved ones were lost, and much sorrow was suffered at this historical period that tore apart several lives. Union Home Minister Amit Shah also remembered the victims of Partition and described August 14, 1947, as one of the most

brutal chapters in history. In a post on X, Shah said: “The day of 14 August 1947 stands witness to one of the most brutal chapters in history, in which millions of people had to lose their lives enduring inhuman suffering, and tens of millions were forced to abandon their homes, property, and loved ones and become displaced.This scar of the country’s partition, which is a gift from the Congress, will never be forgotten by history. I pay my respectful homage to all those who lost their lives in this catastrophe and to those who struggled against the atrocities.”“Through Partition Horrors Remembrance Day, the Modi government is reaching the mem-

ories of this tragedy to the youth, so that the forces seeking to divide the country again can never succeed and ‘Ek Bharat Shreshta Bharat’(One India, Excellent India) becomes our supreme goal,” he added. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also paid tribute to those who lost their lives during Partition and said the event was not merely a division of geographical boundaries but also a breaking apart of families, relationships and emotions.In a post on X, Yogi Adityanath said: “The Partition of 1947 was not merely a division of boundaries. It was also a shattering of the dreams, relationships, and emotions of countless families.’Partition Horrors Remembrance Day’ reminds us to recall that unimaginable pain, learn from it, and conveys the message of holding the unity and integrity of the nation above all. A modest homage to the defenseless folks that perished in this terrible disintegration. We shall always be motivated to create a powerful, cohesive, and indivisible India by their memory.On August 14, people mark Partition Horrors Remembrance Day to commemorate the pain, dislocation, and fatalities brought on by India’s 1947 Partition. Millions of individuals crossed freshly drawn boundaries amid widespread community violence and unrest, resulting in one of the greatest human migrations in contemporary history.

Tanzid Tamim of Bangladesh makes history in the first Australia Test with an incredible hundred



Darwin: In Bangladesh’s cricket history, August 14, 2026, will always be a memorable day. Tanzid became the first batter in his nation’s cricket history to achieve a hundred in the first Test match against Australia on Friday at the Marra Cricket Ground in Darwin. As Bangladesh attempts to win its first Test match in Australia, Tanzid batted superbly in ideal circumstances in the capital of the Northern Territory.

The 25-year-old made history by seeming to be in total control against the Australian assault in just his second Test match. He had a let-off on 62 when he edged Nathan Lyon to first slip, where the usually reliable Steve Smith couldn’t hold on to a sharp chance.Tanzid brought up his ton with a push through mid-off off Lyon midway through the second session. He took 188 balls to reach triple figures, hitting eight

fours and a massive six off Lyon. He perished soon after, trying to hit Lyon out of the ground but only finding Mitchell Starc at deep mid-off.The entire Bangladesh camp erupted in joy as Tanzid reached the triple-digit mark. After a fantastic opening day in which they bowled the highly regarded Australians out for 198, Bangladesh would have been expecting for a bright start to the morning. Tanzid and

Mominul Haque accomplished just that, batting easily thru the opening hour of play and beginning the day at 96-1.The Bangladeshi partnership played quietly, taking singles when they were available and waited to attack on the infrequent poor balls, but the Australian bowlers’ performance on Thursday was far better. Just before the drinks break, Tanzid reached his half-century, scoring 50 off 102 balls. On 49, Mominul attempted to punch a Josh Hazlewood delivery thru the off-side, but he only managed a thick edge to wicketkeeper Alex Carey. Mominul was likely to follow Tanzid in achieving the milestone. Bangladesh was now 138-2, 60 runs behind the Australian first innings, with to the pair’s 102 runs.Against a weary Australian assault, captain Najmul joined Tanzid at the crease and quickly boosted the scoring pace. When Mushfiqu joined his captain after Tanzid was fired, that increased even further.

Significant Relief for Karur Victims After Vijay Government Jobs Are Approved by a Top Court

Chennai, Aug 14: The Supreme Court stayed the Madras High Court order that had revoked the Tamil Nadu government’s jobs order on Friday, citing the Vijay government’s action to provide jobs to families of those who perished in the Karur stampede last year. The court said, “Why can’t the government give employment to families in such tragedies?”In September of last year, while the DMK was in power, Vijay spoke at a TVK rally that resulted in a stampede that killed forty-one persons, including children.The police said that Vijay’s delayed arrival caused crowds to grow larger than allowed and listed a number of infractions, such as poor food, drinking water, and restroom facilities. ”A stampede occurred, resulting in fatalities. How are you to argue that they shouldn’t be given jobs if the government has determined that they should receive some assistance and financial compensation? In a notice to the chief secretary of Tamil Nadu and others, a bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and K Vinod Chandran stated, “Suppose the only member died in the tragedy, shouldn’t the government give some employment to son or daughter?”On July 27, the Madras High Court overturned Vijay’s order giving government jobs to relatives of those killed in the stampede, citing violations of the Constitution’s Article 14 (Right to Equality) and Article 16 (Equality of Opportunity in Government Employment). This was a blow to the TVK government.

The High Court said that the action will create “flood-gates” for other people looking for similar jobs.The high court’s division bench, which included Justices CV Karthikeyan and R Sakthivel, ruled that it was inappropriate to ignore the requirements of several people who are awaiting compassionate appointments in government agencies.Thirty-two legal heirs of the martyrs who perished in the disaster received heartfelt appointment orders from Chief Minister Vijay earlier in July. The state government’s relief and rehabilitation efforts, which aim to give the grieving families financial stability, include the compassionate appointments.

‘D Gukesh Is Crumbling Under Pressure’ Hikaru Nakamura’s Straightforward Assessment



American: World champion D. Gukesh is crumbling under the weight of expectations and needs to tune out the noise to regain his form ahead of his title defense, according to American Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura, who also revealed that the 2028 Chess Olympiad could be his final tournament featuring “true classical” chess. Gukesh has been in a slump following his historic 2024 World Championship triumph, slipping in the ratings after finishing last at Norway Chess and a recent event in Chennai, as well as bad performances at the Tata Steel Chess Tournament and Prague Mas-

ters. ”I don’t know what Gukesh can do differently. I know what he should have done differently, which is to basically be willing to take draws in a lot of games instead of trying to play for the win,” Nakamura said on Wednesday.“But obviously, I’m not Indian, so I don’t necessarily understand the culture or all the pressure that he’s facing. But I get the general sense that there’s a lot of pressure, whether it’s external or internal. I think he’s crumbling because of it.”I think if he can kind of just block it all out and forget that he’s world champion. You know, this is obviously quotable. But sort

of forget that he’s never going to be Magnus Carlsen. I’m quite confident his rating will go back up.”Gukesh’s classical FIDE rating dropped to 2703 in the August 2026 list.“I don’t know if it’ll go to 2,800. But I mean, he’ll definitely get to 2,740 at least if he kind of just puts a couple of things out of his mind. But obviously, it’s very hard,” Nakamura continued. ”I mean, he’s one of the world champions, and you’re not the best player, and everyone’s comparing you to probably the greatest player of all time. It’s very difficult mentally.”

Nakamura, however, does not believe Gukesh’s upcoming title defence against Uzbek challenger Javokhir Sindarov is a foregone conclusion, despite considering him the underdog.“Even though I think Gukesh is the big underdog in the match, I don’t think it’s that unlikely that he wins the match. It’s like 75-25 in favour of Sindarov.

If the match happened today, Sindarov is playing better, so Sindarov is likely to win. But as I said, 75-25 doesn’t necessarily mean you’re going to win every time.“But I think it’s going to be a close match. I don’t think it’s going to be some blowout like a lot of people think it will be.”

Gujarat’s Sardar Patel Sports Award is given to “Garv Hai” athlete Nurbhan Jamani

Gujarat: The Government of Gujarat presented Nurbhan Noorali Jamani, India’s top-ranked para table tennis player, with the esteemed Sardar Patel Sports Award, adding yet another honor to the Adani Sportsline “Garv Hai” athlete’s career. The award was given out on August 12 at a ceremony in Gandhinagar by Gujarat’s Deputy Chief Minister, Harsh Sanghavi. The Sardar Patel Sports Award is one of the top athletic awards in the state and was established by the Gujarati government’s Sports, Youth, and Cultural Activities Department. The award, which bears the name of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the “Iron Man of India” and the mastermind behind India’s political unification, honors sportsmen who, by their sporting accomplishments, distinguish Gujarat and the country with resiliency, tenacity, and greatness. Diagnosed with polio at the age of five, Nurbhan first competed in para table tennis between 2007 and 2010 before stepping away from the sport for more than a decade. Her return to competitive table tennis in 2022 marked the beginning of an extraordinary comeback.

Chief Justice Attacks Bar Council Over Order “This Is Between Students And Me”



New Delhi, Aug 14: Chief Justice Surya Kant Mishra’s communication to the Bar Council of India (BCI), which had instructed all State Bar Councils to refrain from admitting students who had graduated from NALSAR University of Hyderabad, was titled “Back off.” The order to stop graduates’ enrollment was given by the BCI, the highest regulatory organization of the legal profession, while an investigation into a student campaign against the Chief Justice’s attendance at the university’s convocation was conducted. The BCI claimed within hours of the order’s issuance that its most recent data showed that the great majority of 2026 NALSAR graduates were innocent and had no inten-

tion of taking part in any action that would be disrespectful to the Chief Justice. ”Absolutely uncalled for. I myself was a student who was actively engaged in protests. It’s a dialogue between me and students; who are they (BCI) to interfere,” the Chief Justice underlined.

The observations came after a plea challenging the BCI circular was mentioned for urgent listing. The top court has sought a response from BCI on its circulars, saying no punitive action should be taken against NALSAR students or faculty members.The counsel appearing for the BCI told the bench that the circular has been withdrawn.The Council had sought a factual report from the Vice-Chancellor

on those who initiated, organised or mobilised the campaign and, pending the inquiry, directed that no 2026 graduate be enrolled by any State Bar Council. However, that decision now stands withdrawn. Vikas Singh, a senior attorney and president of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), had already denounced the BCI’s action as “arbitrary, illegal, and disproportionate.”

Singh vehemently disagreed with the directive in a letter to BCI Chairman Manan Kumar Mishra on August 13. Singh said that the general limitation amounted to an effort to frighten law students for expressing their basic right to freedom of speech and expression.According to the head of the SCBA, colleges were meant to be places for open discussion and thinking, and students shouldn’t be afraid of being denied admission to the legal profession just because they disagree with a constitutional authority. ”Students cannot be threatened with denial of their right to enter the legal profession merely because they have expressed disagreement with a constitutional authority” , the senior lawyer said.

India withdraws from the ASEAN Cup in order to focus on the Brazil friendly

Kolkata: All India Football Federation (AIFF) deputy secretary general M Satyanarayanan said on Thursday that India has withdrawn from the first FIFA ASEAN Cup in order to focus on their prestigious international friendly against five-time world champions Brazil in October. India will also lose out on the chance to compete against some of Southeast Asia’s top teams in a FIFA-approved event due to their withdrawal. ”We have pulled out of the FIFA ASEAN Cup since we can’t play both Brazil and FIFA ASEAN Cup,” Satyanarayanan told PTI.The inaugural tournament was conceived as a new international competition for teams from the ASEAN region, with India invited as one of the non-ASEAN participants.India had initially accepted FIFA’s invitation to participate in the new tournament and were subsequently drawn in Division 1 Group A alongside Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. The



competition is scheduled to be played during the September 21-October 6 FIFA international window.However, India’s commitment to play Brazil on October 3 at Kolkata’s Salt Lake Stadium created a scheduling clash. The AIFF had earlier explored the possibility of fielding a separate or developmental squad in the ASEAN Cup, but has now opted to withdraw altogether and use the international window for friendlies. The match against Brazil was officially announced last month.Meanwhile, reports on Thursday suggested that

India are exploring friendlies against teams that featured at the 2026 FIFA World Cup, with Cabo Verde and Iran among the sides being discussed. However, those fixtures have not yet been officially confirmed by the AIFF. The AIFF’s decision marks a significant change from its plans earlier this year, when it had accepted FIFA’s invitation and signed the participation agreement. India, who failed to qualify for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, have struggled to secure regular high-quality opposition in recent years.

Dos and Don’ts for Hoisting on Independence Day in 2026 The flag of the country August 15

Dehradun, Aug 14: India commemorates the sacrifices made by freedom warriors who battled for the country’s liberation on August 15 each year. The national song is proudly sung as the Tricolor is raised everywhere in the nation, from residences to businesses. Almost 200 years of British rule came to an end on August 15, 1947, when India started its road toward independence and democracy. Flag-hoisting rituals, cultural events, and memorials to those who lost their lives against colonial control have all been held on this day ever since. According to traditional protocol, the national flag should be hoisted at sunrise and lowered at sunset. However, following the 2022 amendment to the Flag Code of India, the flag can now be flown at night if it is adequately illuminated. On Independence Day, the flag is specifically hoisted from the bottom of the flagpole to the top, symbolising India’s triumph over colonial rule in 1947. The flag should always be hoisted briskly and lowered slowly with dignity. The saffron band must be at the top when hoisted vertically. Display the flag in a position of prominence, ensuring it is not overshadowed by other flags or objects.When



displayed horizontally, the saffron band should be at the top. When displayed vertically, the saffron band should be on the left side as viewed by the audience.Ensure the flag is clean, undamaged, and free from tears or discolouration.The flag can be made of hand-spun, hand-woven, or machine-made cotton, polyester, wool, or silk khadi bunting, as per the Flag Code. The flag can be flown on all days, including Sundays and holidays, by individuals, private organisations, and educational institutions, as per the amended Flag Code of 2002.The flag may be flown at night only if it is well-lit and prominently displayed.The flag’s proportions (length to width ratio of 3:2) must be maintained,

regardless of size.During ceremonies, the flag may be used to cover a statue or monument being unveiled, but should not touch the ground or floor.A damaged or soiled flag should be disposed of privately by burning or in a manner consistent with its dignity. The flag must not be used in a manner that insults its dignity, such as dipping it in salute to any person or thing.The flag must not be flown upside down (saffron band at the bottom) or in a manner that disrespects it.The flag must not touch the ground, floor, or water. The flag must not be used for commercial purposes, such as on costumes, cushions, napkins, or other items, except as permitted (e.g., paper flags during national events).

Tanzid Hasan's Century Puts Bangladesh in Command Against Australia on Day Two

New Delhi: Opener Tanzid Hasan became the first Bangladesh cricketer to score a Test century in Australia on Friday as the visitors dominated another day in Darwin to take a 153-run first-innings lead over Australia in the opening Test. Tanzid's 102 off 189 balls was the centerpiece of Bangladesh's batting display as they reached 351/6 at stumps, having resumed the day at 96/1 and still 102 runs behind Australia's first-innings total of 198. The 24-year-old reached his maiden Test century with a single off Nathan Lyon from 188 deliveries. It was a patient innings, built around long periods of defence and careful shot selection, but his stay at the crease ended almost immediately after he reached three figures. Tanzid added only one more run before attempting to loft Lyon down the ground. He did not get enough on the shot and Mitchell Starc took the catch at long-off. Before his dismissal, Tanzid had played a key role in Bangladesh's recovery, first combining with Mominul Haque for a 102-run partnership for the second wicket. Mominul fell for



49, but Bangladesh continued to make steady progress as captain Najmul Hossain Shanto joined Tanzid at the crease. The pair added 93 for the third wicket before Tanzid's dismissal gave Australia some relief. Shanto went on to score 84 from 126 balls and looked set to take Bangladesh deep into the final session. Australia eventually found a way through after taking the second new ball, with Shanto one of three Bangladesh batters dismissed in a four-over period. That spell briefly gave

Australia an opening, but Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Hasan Mahmud put on an unbeaten 43 for the seventh wicket to ensure Bangladesh finished the day firmly on top. Mehidy was unbeaten on 32 and Hasan on 13 at stumps, with Bangladesh four wickets away from the end of their innings and already 153 runs ahead. Bangladesh's position is a significant turnaround after Australia were bowled out for 198 on the opening day. The visitors' bowlers had kept Australia's batting under pressure and their

batters followed up with a disciplined performance on Friday. Playing their first Test in Australia since 2003, Bangladesh have shown little sign of being overawed by the occasion or Australia's highly rated bowling attack. Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc, along with veteran off-spinner Nathan Lyon, have struggled to make regular breakthroughs against a Bangladesh batting lineup that has been prepared to spend time at the crease. The warm conditions in

Darwin have made for a demanding contest, but Bangladesh's batters have been willing to defend patiently and wait for opportunities to score. Australia's late burst with the second new ball was their best period of the day, but Mehidy and Hasan's partnership ensured Bangladesh retained control going into the close. The two-Test Top End series begins a demanding 12 months for Australia, who are scheduled to play 20 Tests, including series against South Africa, India and England.

Arab Football Chiefs Back Infantino Amid Growing FIFA Opposition

New Delhi: Six Arab football federations have thrown their weight behind Gianni Infantino as the FIFA president faces growing pressure over his failed plan to bring private investors into World Cup commercial interests. The public show of support comes as opposition to Infantino's leadership continues to grow across world football. The backing came from Morocco, Qatar, Egypt, Mauritania, Lebanon and Sudan, with four of the six federation presidents also serving on the FIFA Council. In a joint statement, the federations said they had "full support" and "confidence" in Infantino and his leadership of global football. "We, the undersigned leaders of our respective football associations, express our full support for Mr. Gianni Infantino, President of FIFA, and reaffirm our confidence in his leadership and continued commitment to the development of football worldwide," the statement read. "We deeply appreciate Mr. Infantino's sustained efforts to advance football globally, expand opportunities across all regions and strengthen the game's role in bringing people and communities together." The federations also said they



wanted to continue working with Infantino towards a stronger future for world football and highlighted the contribution of Arab football to the global game. The support comes at a crucial moment for Infantino, whose proposed 20 billion USD commercial structure was withdrawn after widespread opposition from football officials. UEFA, AFC and Concacaf have demanded an independent review of the plan, describing its handling as a serious breach of trust. The FIFA president's position has come under increasing scrutiny following the controversy. UEFA, AFC and Concacaf issued a joint letter accusing FIFA's leadership of pushing the investment proposal without adequate consultation with member associations. UEFA has also warned that its members could consider

boycotting FIFA competitions. The Football Association of Ireland added to the pressure on Thursday by withdrawing its support for Infantino's re-election, citing concerns over governance, transparency and consultation. England and Wales have also withdrawn their support, while Northern Ireland has backed UEFA's position. Infantino had previously appeared to be heading towards an uncontested re-election in 2027, but the growing opposition has changed the political landscape around the FIFA presidency. The latest backing also exposes a split within the Asian football landscape. Qatar and Lebanon have sided publicly with Infantino despite the AFC being among the confederations demanding greater scrutiny of the FIFA president's conduct.

FIH Hockey World Cup 2026: Harmanpreet Singh-led India Aim to Begin a Promising New Chapter

New Delhi: India enters the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup 2026 with history on their shoulders and a new generation ready to create its own chapter. Fifty-one years after India's lone triumph at the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup, the echoes of 1975 continue to linger in the nation's hockey consciousness. That title-winning campaign, led by captain Ajit Pal Singh in Kuala Lumpur, remains a cherished chapter in Indian sporting folklore -- a reminder of an era when hockey was woven deeply into the country's sporting identity, according to a release. As the FIH Hockey World Cup Belgium and Netherlands 2026 gets underway on August 15, India return to the global stage with that rich legacy behind them, but with a clear understanding

that history cannot win matches. For captain Harmanpreet Singh and his team, the challenge is to turn nostalgia into motivation and reputation into results. There is an intriguing parallel between the present and that celebrated campaign of 1975. Ajit Pal Singh lifted the World Cup in his second appearance as India's captain, having led the side at the 1971 edition previously. Harmanpreet, too, will lead India at his second World Cup as captain, having first worn the captain's armband at the 2023 edition. In doing so, he becomes only the second Indian player after Ajit Pal Singh to captain India at two World Cups. India's preparations for the tournament have offered plenty of encouragement. The team produced an improved performance in the final leg of the



FIH Pro League, registering notable victories over reigning world champions Germany and Olympic champions the

Netherlands. They also twice defeated arch-rivals Pakistan and overcame England in a shootout -- results that acquire

added significance with both Pakistan and England drawn alongside India in this World Cup, the release said. India

have been placed in Pool D, alongside England, Pakistan and Wales. They begin their campaign

against Wales on August 15, before facing England on August 17 and Pakistan on August 19. The compact pool stage leaves little room for complacency, with every result potentially carrying implications beyond the opening phase. The tournament format itself presents a different tactical challenge. Unlike previous editions, the 2026 World Cup will not have a conventional quarterfinal stage. The top two teams from each of the four pools in the first stage will remain in the race to the semi-finals. Pools E and F in the second phase will have the top eight teams from the initial stage, while the remaining eight will be left to play for classification in Pools G and H. The teams finishing in top two positions in Pools E and F of second

phase will qualify for the semi-finals. Crucially, teams will carry forward the result and points earned against the fellow qualifier from their original pool, making every match in the first phase especially valuable. For India, experience will be one of their key assets. Mandeep Singh and Manpreet Singh are set to make their fourth World Cup appearances. Manpreet, who has accumulated an extraordinary 417 international appearances as new India record, will also be the most-capped player at the tournament. Alongside them, Harmanpreet, Hardik Singh, Amit Rohidas, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Sumit and Nilakanta Sharma form a seasoned core capable of guiding the team through the pressure of a major championship.

Ecuador Police Seize 469kg Cocaine in Bags Featuring Erling Haaland's Face

New Delhi: Ecuadorian authorities have intercepted a massive cocaine consignment carrying an unusual image: Norway football star Erling Haaland. Anti-narcotics officers seized 469 kilograms (1,034 pounds) of cocaine during a raid on a truck near the Colombian border on Wednesday. The drugs were packed into 370 parcels, many of which carried stickers featuring the face of the Manchester City striker. The haul was discovered after police received an anonymous tip about a suspicious vehicle travelling along the Pan-American Highway. Officers stopped and searched the truck before uncovering a concealed compartment containing the cocaine. Authorities also arrested a suspect during the operation. Police have not explained why Haaland's image was used on the packages, although using pictures, names or symbols associated with famous personalities is a known tactic among drug traffick-



ing organisations to identify shipments or indicate their intended recipients. Footage released by Ecuadorian police showed officers removing the packages from the truck's hidden compartment. The green-wrapped parcels prominently displayed images of Haaland. The Norwegian forward became one of the most recognisable faces of the recent World Cup after scoring seven goals in four matches. His performances,

imposing appearance and playful personality also made him a major figure across social media, where fans have frequently turned him into memes and viral content. Haaland, however, is not the first football superstar whose likeness has been found on suspected drug shipments. Lionel Messi's image has also appeared on packages seized by authorities, according to reports. Ecuador has emerged as a

key transit point in the international cocaine trade, with criminal groups using the country to move narcotics towards Central America and, ultimately, markets in the United States and Europe. Police said the latest seizure took place near Guagua Negro, close to the border city of Tulcan, around 246 kilometres (153 miles) north of Quito. A woman identified as Mara R., who was carrying Colombian identification

documents, was also arrested. Authorities estimated that the cocaine would have been worth around \$842,000 on Ecuador's domestic market. Its potential value rises sharply overseas, with estimates of more than \$11 million in the United States and over \$19.6 million (17 million euros) in Europe. Ecuadorian authorities say domestic criminal groups, often working with Colombian and Mexican cartels, control much of the country's trafficking network. Around 80% of the cocaine moving through Ecuador is believed to originate in Colombia, with the remainder coming from Peru. The scale of Ecuador's drug problem has continued to grow. Police seized approximately 80 tonnes of drugs during the first half of this year, after confiscating nearly 215 tonnes in 2025. The figure was even higher in 2024, when authorities reported seizing almost 295 tonnes, most of it cocaine.

Gill Hints Prasad Inclusion as India Weigh Pace Options

New Delhi: India captain Shubman Gill has dropped a strong hint that Prasidh Krishna could partner Mohammed Siraj with the new ball in the first Test against Sri Lanka, while admitting that the choice between the Karnataka pacer and rookie Gurnoor Brar remains a "tough call." The first Test starts on Saturday, with Jasprit Bumrah missing the series due to a knee injury. Siraj is the only certainty among India's four pace options, leaving the team with a decision to make over who takes the other spot. India are expected to play three left-arm spinners, with Ravindra Jadeja and Manav Suthar offering the orthodox option and Kuldeep Yadav providing the wrist-spin variety. That makes the second seamer's slot the main selection question. The choice is between the 6 ft 5 in Brar and Prasidh, who is an inch shorter and has played seven Tests, taking 25 wickets. Auqib Nabi is not in contention for the opening game. "Gurnoor Brar is excellent with the old ball as he can extract



bounce at a good pace. But Prasidh Krishna is bowling well of late as we have seen in the warm-up match. So it's a tough call," Gill said on the eve of the Test. Gill believes Bumrah's absence gives the other pacers an opportunity to step up and take responsibility. "Jasprit Bumrah is not here but it's an opportunity for someone to step up. It's all about understanding the pace of the game," he said. With Bumrah out, Siraj is now the most experienced seamer in the squad. Prasidh, Brar and newly called-up Auqib Nabi are the other pace options available to India. India bowling coach Morne Morkel expects the

conditions in Sri Lanka to test the fast bowlers, particularly once the Kookaburra ball starts to lose its hardness. "Our skill is there, and the planning will be there, but the biggest challenge coming to Sri Lanka is the heat, the humidity, and the Kookaburra ball going soft a little earlier. It will go soft after 25 or 30 overs, so we have to expect that," Morkel said at the pre-match press conference. "In these conditions, it's all about your mindset. If you're a fast bowler, if you're going to bowl the shortest spells, the energy you put into the ball and putting it into good areas, you'll always have opportunity."